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Lt. Col. Jeff Carr

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SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 2004

Facing big Fallujah assault, rebels strike across Iraq

Attacks kill 30 Iraqis, injure almost two dozen U.S. troops

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U.S. Marines of the 1st Division line up for a joined prayer at their base outside Fallujah, Iraq, on Saturday. More than 10,000 U.S. troops have taken positions around the rebel-controlled city, bolstering the U.S. Marine units expected to lead a joint Army-Marine assault on the city.

AP

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States

Jackson case: With Michael Jackson's child molestation trial set to begin Jan. 31, a California judge scheduled an exhaustive series of hearings to resolve all pretrial motions and advised lawyers for both sides he won't consider any delays.

Also on Friday, lawyers on both sides spent hours poring over file folders seized by sheriff's deputies from the home of Jackson's personal assistant to sort out those that would be considered confidential. They were not released in open court.

Peterson deliberations: After a third day of deliberations, jurors in Scott Peterson's murder trial retired to a hotel in Redwood City, Calif., where they are prohibited from discussing the case and are not allowed visitors.

The jurors are only permitted to watch sports and movies from a court-approved selection on television until they resume deliberations Monday.

Judge Alfred A. Delucchi has reversed course and barred live television coverage of the verdict, citing concern for the families of Peterson and his wife, Laci, whom he is accused of killing around Christmas Eve 2002. The verdict will be captured on a live audio feed, which radio and TV stations will be allowed to broadcast.

Slaying of Williams half-sister: A judge declared a mistrial Friday in the case of one of two men charged in the September 2003 slaying of the half-sister of tennis stars Venus and Serena Williams.

The jury reported it was 9-3 in favor of acquitting Aaron Michael Hammer, said district attorney's office spokeswoman Sandi Gibbons.

Hammer, 25, was accused of shooting at Yehudis Price with a .45-caliber handgun. Prosecutors said the shot that killed Price wasn't from that weapon, but state law allows a murder charge for taking part in a crime in which a person is killed by someone else.

Internet organ donor: A Tennessee man who donated his kidney to a dialysis patient he met through the Internet has accepted a television show's offer to take a lie detector test aimed at rebutting claims he was paid.

Rob Smitty's decision to donate his kidney to Bob Hickey of Colorado came after the two met through a for-profit Web site that matches donors and patients for a fee.

Smitty's lawyer, Bill Speck, said he now must rebut the "presumption that most people have that he did it for money or personal gain." He said such questions, if left unanswered, "will prevent other people from coming forward and doing altruistic and kind acts."

Speck said he will travel with Smitty to Los Angeles for a Nov. 13 lie-detector test offered by the PAX TV network for its planned "Lie Detector" series.

Military

Army captain's request: The Army has agreed to honorably discharge an Army captain who challenged his assignment to Iraq in court, saying he had properly resigned.

Jay Ferriello, 31, emerged smiling from U.S. District Court on Friday after his lawyer, Barry Slotnick, told a judge that Ferriello was withdrawing his legal challenge because the Army on Wednesday had formally and honorably discharged him.

Arriving in New York City, who had served in South Korea and Bosnia, said he brought his



Mount St. Helens lava levels: Magma in the crater of Mount St. Helens glows in this U.S. Geological Survey photo taken at twilight Thursday from the Johnston Ridge Observatory. Scientists say the lava dome in the crater of the volcano has risen more than 300 feet since the last week of October.

lawsuit two weeks ago because he was assigned to Iraq even though he had told the Army in June that he was resigning because his eight-year term was finished.

Air Force GPS launch: After a series of delays, a Boeing Delta 2 rocket carrying a Global Positioning System satellite for the Air Force roared into space early Saturday. The launch took place shortly after midnight and lit up the slightly overcast sky, dramatically silhouetting a bank of nearby clouds.

After a three-week checkout period, the spacecraft is set to become the 30th operational unit in the GPS constellation. The system requires a minimum of 24 satellites to operate at full capacity.

World

Ivory Coast attack: The French military attacked an airport in the capital of Ivory Coast, destroying an unspecified number of aircraft, the head of Ivory Coast's military operations said Saturday.

It was not immediately clear if the Ivory Coast army official was referring to a separate attack from a French-Ivory Coast clash that destroyed three Ivorian aircraft, or giving a different account of how those three aircraft were destroyed.

"The planes were destroyed by shots from the French military at Yamoussoukro airport," Col. Philippe Mangou told The Associated Press. "The planes were on the ground."

France headscarf expulsions: Four Muslim teenagers were expelled from high schools in eastern France under a new law that bans the wearing of Islamic head scarves and other obvious religious symbols in classrooms, school officials said Saturday.

Disciplinary panels at two high schools in the Alsace region ordered the expulsions Friday evening, the officials said. Two other girls in area schools were awaiting similar rulings on Saturday.

At least a dozen girls have been expelled under a new law banning Islamic head scarves, Jewish skullcaps and large Christian crosses at public schools. The law took effect at the start of the school year.

Bosnia mass graves: After having exhumed 454 bodies, forensic experts concluded work on the second-largest mass grave

found in Bosnia since the 1992-95 war ended, an official said Saturday.

Identification documents found in the grave indicated that the dead appeared to be Bosnian Muslims and Croats who had lived in and around the town of Prijedor, about 110 miles northwest of Sarajevo, Esad Bajramovic, a member of the missing persons commission in the Muslim-Croat part of Bosnia said.

Many of those in the grave believed to have been killed in the Omarska and Keraterm concentration camps in 1992, Bajramovic said.

Experts had been working for three months on the grave in Staro Kevljani, near Prijedor. It is the 51st mass grave found in the Prijedor area.

East Timor acquittal: The only Indonesian official to be punished for violence that killed up to 2,000 East Timorese in 1999 has been released from jail, following a court decision that overturned his conviction, officials said.

Abilio Jose Soares, East Timor's former governor, left Jakarta's Cipinang prison late Friday, saying "the Supreme Court decision has put the law on its right track."

"Now, I only wish to live with my family as a good citizen," he told reporters. The acquittal has dismayed rights activists who urged Jakarta to punish those responsible.

Business

Arms dealer-Boeing lawsuit: A jury has awarded an international arms dealer \$3.6 million in damages, after he accused Boeing Co. of reneging on a deal to buy two Russian-made missile launchers and ruining his reputation among other potential customers.

Over the judgment, Ga.-based Blane International Group Inc., \$3.5 million in punitive damages and \$100,000 in compensation for the missile launchers Boeing allegedly had intended to resell to the U.S. Navy.

Stories and photos from wire services

Insurgent strikes kill more than 30 in Iraq

29 Iraqis die in Samarra; 16 U.S. troops injured in Ramadi suicide bombing

ROBERT H. REID
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — Facing a major assault in Fallujah, insurgents struck back Saturday with suicide car bombs and rockets across a wide swath of central Iraq, killing over 30 people and wounding more than 60 others, including almost two dozen Americans.

Those attacks, which included use of police vehicles in car-bombings, could have been aimed at relieving pressure on Fallujah, where about 10,000 American troops are massing for a major assault. U.S. jets pounded Fallujah early Saturday in the heaviest airstrikes in six months — including five 500-pound bombs dropped on insurgent targets.

The deadliest attacks Saturday occurred in Samarra, 60 miles north of Baghdad, where insurgents stormed a police station, triggered at least two suicide car bombs and fired mortars at government installations. One of the car bombs, which targeted the mayor's office, used a stolen Iraqi police vehicle, the U.S. military said.

Twenty-nine people, including 17 police and 12 Iraqi civilians, were killed throughout the city, the U.S. military said. Arabic language television stations said more than 30 died as gangs of insurgents roamed the city, clashing with American and Iraqi forces.

The dead included the local Iraqi National Guard commander, Abdel Razeq Shaker al-Garnali, hospital officials said. Another 40 people, including 17 policemen, were injured, the military said.

U.S. military vehicles roamed

through the besieged city using loudspeakers to announce an indefinite curfew starting at 2 p.m. Saturday. American warplanes and helicopters roamed the skies.

Elsewhere, 20 American soldiers were wounded Saturday when a suicide bomber using an Iraqi police car rammed their convoy in Ramadi, a major city in the volatile Sunni Triangle, U.S. officials said. They gave no further details, citing security.

Three other American troops were wounded when a car bomb exploded near the entrance to Baghdad International Airport. One Iraqi was killed and another injured, the U.S. military said. Three Humvees were heavily damaged, witnesses said.

Two Marines were injured by a car bomb near a Fallujah checkpoint, and a U.S. soldier was wounded when a roadside bomb exploded south of Fallujah.

Samarra, an ancient city of gold-domed mosques that once served as the capital of a Muslim empire extending from Spain to India, was recaptured from Sunni Muslim insurgents in September and had been touted as a model for restoring government control to areas formerly under guerrilla domination.

U.S. and Iraqi forces hope to use the same techniques if they drive Sunni militants from Fallujah. American commanders have assembled a force of Marines, Army soldiers and U.S.-trained Iraqi fighters around Fallujah, a major insurgent base 40 miles west of Baghdad.

They are awaiting orders from interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi to launch an all-out assault.

However, the violence in Samarra underscored the difficulty



U.S. Marines of the 1st Division fire off a mortar round during training at their base outside Fallujah on Saturday. More than 10,000 U.S. troops have taken positions around the rebel-controlled city.

of maintaining civilian authority in Sunni areas even after the worst of the fighting ebbs. Residents of Samarra's Qadisiyah neighborhood said U.S. troops were conducting house-to-house searches late Saturday.

"I cannot claim that entering Fallujah will end the terrorist attacks in Iraq," Iraq's national security adviser, Qassem Dawoud, told Al-Arabiya television. "But I can say that we will deal with a very big pocket of terrorism in Iraq and we will uproot it. This pocket forms the backbone and

the center for terrorists in other areas in Iraq."

Elsewhere, gunmen killed a former official of Saddam Hussein's intelligence service in Baquba, police said. The assailants stopped a car carrying former Lt. Col. Abdul Sattar al-Luhei, ordered him out of the car and gunned him down in front of his 13-year-old son.

U.S. and Iraqi authorities hope to curb the insurgency so that national elections can be held by the end of January. However, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan and others have warned that a military offensive could trigger a wave of violence that would sabotage the ballot.

The influential Sunni clerical Association of Muslim Scholars has threatened to call a boycott if Fallujah is attacked. A public outcry over civilian casualties prompted the Bush administration to call off a siege in April, after which Fallujah fell under control of radical clerics.

In an open letter to the Iraqi people posted Saturday on the Internet, 26 Saudi scholars and religious preachers said that armed resistance against American troops and their Iraqi allies was a "legitimate right."

The scholars issued a fatwa, or religious edict, prohibiting Iraqis from offering any support for military operations carried out by U.S. forces against militant strongholds.

"Fighting the occupiers is a duty for all those who are able," said the letter dated Friday. "It is a jihad to push back the assailants. Resistance is a legitimate right. A Muslim must not inflict harm on any resistance man or inform

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Friday, at least 1,127 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 865 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include three military civilians.

The AP count is two higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated Friday at 10 a.m. EST.

The British military has reported 73 deaths; Italy, 19; Poland, 13; Spain, 11; Ukraine, nine; Bulgaria, seven; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary and Latvia have reported one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 989 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 756 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ One soldier was killed Friday in an attack on a military base near Fallujah.

■ One soldier was killed Thursday near Balad by an explosive.

The latest identifications reported by the Defense Department:

■ Army Spc. Cody L. Wentz, 21, Williston, N.D.; killed Thursday when an explosive detonated near his military vehicle while on patrol; assigned to the Army National Guard's 141st Engineer Battalion, Williston, N.D.

Two Marines died Thursday from injuries received in an attack in Anbar province; they were assigned to 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

■ Marine Cpl. Jeremiah A. Baro, 21, Fresno, Calif.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Jared P. Hubbard, 22, of Clovis, Calif.



An Iraqi passerby walks near the body of a Turkish truck driver Saturday at the scene of a convoy attack south of Mosul, Iraq. Insurgents attacked a convoy headed south to supply American forces, killing a Turkish driver and destroying three fuel tankers.

about them. Instead, they should be supported and protected." U.S. intelligence estimates there are about 3,000 insurgents dug in behind defenses and booby traps in Fallujah, a city of about 300,000 which has become a symbol throughout the Islamic world of Iraqi resistance to the U.S.-led occupation.

Military planners believe there are about 1,200 hardcore insurgents in Fallujah — at least half of them Iraqis. They are bolstered by insurgent cells with up to 2,000 fighters in the surrounding towns and countryside.

Planners setting up for a smoother 'surge'

Army promises shorter lines, less hassle for next wave of troops in and out of Iraq

BY STEVE LIEWER
Stars and Stripes

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait — Soldiers heading home from war — if they have to go through Kuwait — won't have to worry about crowded tents, hour-long chow lines or no mail.

Tens of thousands of soldiers and Marines last winter and spring experienced "the Surge" — the name Army logisticians gave to the unprecedented hand-off between the first and second waves of troops to serve in Iraq.

Now, as the first soldiers in the third wave of Operation Iraqi Freedom convoy north from Kuwait, the military officials expect this massive troop rotation to go much more smoothly.

"I have a lot more confidence in the plan this year than I did last year," said Lt. Col. Jeff Carra, chief of plans for deployment for the Combined Forces Land Component Command, which supervised that rotation. "The camps will be full, but not for as long."

Carra, 44, is an Army reservist and logisticians with the 377th Theater Support Command. Carra, sometimes called the "bed-down czar" of Kuwait, said CFLCC has adjusted this year based upon hard lessons from the troubles of last winter and spring.

Among the changes:

- Unit rotations have been stretched over seven months instead of four.

- Key movement-support units, such as mayor cells and transportation companies, will rotate before fighting forces instead of at the same time so they are available when needed most.

- More vehicles and equipment will be left in the theater and handed off from unit to unit, saving time on washing, packing and unpacking.

- Troops not needed for washing and packing gear will go straight home instead of waiting in Kuwait.

Seat-of-the-pants planning combined with unexpected catastrophes — bedeviled CFLCC during the Surge, a time when 250,000 troops passed through Kuwait on their way to or from the Iraqi theater. It was the biggest troop movement since the end of World War II and the biggest troop swap in history.

In retrospect, Carra grades his unit's handling of the Surge as a C- or D+. He expects CFLCC to earn a solid B during the coming rotation because the command is smarter and better organized.

"We had problems [last win-



PHOTOS BY STEVE LIEWER/Stars and Stripes

These soldiers near the front of the lunch line at Camp New York's main dining facility in February had been waiting for more than an hour. The lines at restaurants, chow halls, the phone bank and the post exchange swelled as 1st Infantry Division troops from Germany, as well as Marines, streamed into the camp. Army officials say better planning for the next surge this winter will alleviate many of those problems.

ter); we staggered through them," he said in a candid interview last week. "Despite [our] best efforts, it did not go well."

The sheer immensity of the Surge is hard to comprehend.

Troops from seven divisions had to be flown in and out of the theater at the same time as their personal gear, vehicles and more than 750,000 tons of cargo. They needed buses to carry the troops and trucks to carry their stuff.

The movements of 123 ships had to be coordinated with those of 3,076 aircraft and 2,295 trucks. Between Jan. 5 and April 14, CFLCC ran 23,488 convoys, washed 40,000 vehicles, pumped 68 million gallons of fuel, issued 428 million spare parts, and served more than 25 million hot meals.

All of this while fighting an enemy in the field.

"We knew it was going to be ugly, but we didn't know what to expect," Carra said. "There's no school you can go to, no book you can read on how you plan and execute an exercise this big."

Carra said planning didn't start early enough. He arrived just be-

Lesson learned: Expect the unexpected

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait — Planning for the influx of 250,000 troops heading in and out of Iraq is sort of like planning for a hurricane.

"You can't account for intangibles," said Capt. Joe James, a Florida National Guard force flow analyst, who worked side-by-side with Lt. Col. Jeff Carra, chief of plans for deployment for the Combined Forces Land Component Command. It was Carra who was responsible for handling the "Surge," the name Army logisticians gave to the handoff between the first and second waves of troops to serve in Iraq.

James arrived at the beginning of the Surge in mid-January as the officer-in-charge of the 264 wash points, where all of the Humvees, trucks and tanks leaving the theater would be cleaned before passing through customs and being loaded for home. He asked what the plan was for handling all the vehicles. He found out there was none — he'd be expected to develop it on the fly.

To complicate matters, Carra said, Kuwait suffered its wettest rainy season in 50 years. For two weeks in early January, the only highway from Kuwait to Iraq lay impassable under floodwaters.

In late February, the engine room of one of the giant cargo ships, the USNS Shugart, caught fire at the peak of the 1st Infantry Division's deployment. The entire port shut down for two days, Carra said,

so shore workers could fight the fire. On another day, contract truck drivers from India and Pakistan got in a brawl in their motor pool, halting part of the truck operations for the day.

As soldiers and Marines poured into the camps, Carra ordered new tents erected and trucks in portable shower units, sometimes hours ahead of arriving troops.

The schedule had little flexibility because the Pentagon wished to keep its promise that troops would head home within 365 days of their arrival. Since they had come at almost the same time in 2003, they had to leave at the same time in 2004.

Private contractors hired to supplement military personnel sometimes didn't deliver. Running short of sturdy Army cots, CFLCC bought thousands from a Middle East contractor. But the camping cots frequently fell apart under the weight of troops and gear and had to be replaced with the Army's own.

CFLCC contracted with a Kuwaiti trucking firm for 400 trucks to haul freight. The owner coughed up only 250. Since this was the only big trucking company in the tiny Rhode Island-sized country, the Army had no choice but to work with him.

"You can sue him for breach of contract," Carra said, "but that doesn't give you your trucks."

— Steve Liewer

fore Thanksgiving to find that Camp New York, with a capacity of 9,500 troops, had just been shut down. He quickly reopened it knowing the other two main camps, Udairi (now called Buehring) and Virginia couldn't handle a flow expected to peak at 70,000 troops.

The result? Soldiers at the camps in Kuwait sat in long lines

at the barber shops. Troops waited four to six hours to shop depleted shelves at the post exchanges. Chow hall lines stretched to one hour and phone lines to three.

One 1st Infantry Division soldier jokingly called New York "Camp Wait-in-Line-a-Lot."

Carra and Capt. Joe James, a Florida National Guard force flow analyst who worked

side-by-side with Carra throughout the Surge, believe there will be no repeat this year. Most of the support units already have rotated and will be running at full speed by the time the 2005 surge hits.

The coming winter's surge, too, will be much smaller.

SEE SURGE ON PAGE 5

Wary Sunnis make proposal on elections

Groups say they'll dissuade violence if demands are met

By Karl Vick
The Washington Post

BAHGHAD — As Marines step up preparations for military offensives on two major Iraqi cities, a number of Sunni Muslim leaders are forwarding a plan to establish the rule of law in those areas through peaceful means, with the promise of reducing the insurgency across a large swath of the country.

The bid is led by groups that have encouraged violent resistance in central, western and northern Iraq since the U.S.-led invasion 18 months ago. The groups say they'll withdraw their support for violence if Iraq's interim government can reassure Sunni leaders wary of national elections, which are scheduled for the end of January.

The Sunnis have proposed six measures, including a demand that U.S. forces remain confined to bases in the month before balloting. Such an ambitious demand, which some advocates acknowledge is not likely to be met and may be open to negotiation, represents a dramatic shift by Sunni groups opposed to the U.S. operation in Iraq.

Until now, groups such as the Association of Muslim Scholars, which supports the new proposal, had insisted that no election could be considered legitimate until Western troops left Iraq. The association has repeatedly threatened to call for an election boycott through the megaphones of Iraq's Sunni mosques, which the association represents.

"We took an initiative regarding the elections. It is being welcomed by the people on the boycott side," said Wamidh Nakhmi, a Baghdad University political science professor who is spokesman for the initiative, which includes two prominent Shiite clerics. "They said that if such agreements could be met by the Americans, they could change to participation."

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad offered no reaction to the proposal, which it received this week. A Western diplomat emphasized that any decision lay with Iraq's interim government.

In separate interviews, senior U.S. and Iraqi officials were privately skeptical of

the overture and indicated it was unlikely to avert a military offensive on Fallujah and Ramadi, which commanders say could begin at any time.

"They don't seem to get it. The monopoly of power is over," said a senior Iraqi government official, referring to former President Saddam Hussein's Sunni-dominated government. "One wonders how representative these elements are of the mainstream Sunni population. They may represent nostalgia for the past, but for sure no realistic vision for the future."

Some former officials with experience in Iraq called the Sunni proposal a potential breakthrough that could avert not only an assault on Fallujah but also a violent aftermath, when insurgents might take the fight elsewhere.

"Most of what we've learned about insurgents is that you can't defeat one through purely military means," said Larry Diamond, who served in the U.S.-led occupation authority.

"When you try to do that, you may win the battle but lose the war. The insurgency in the Sunni heartland is now quite broad-based, and I don't think we're going to defeat the insurgency in this part of the country through purely military means. I think we're looking at a protracted insurgency which will get worse if we go forward with elections" that many Sunnis boycott.

"These groups," Diamond said, "have to be given evidence that it's in their interests to participate in the electoral process."

U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, in a

letter to President Bush disclosed Friday, warned that an assault on Fallujah "would be very disruptive of Iraq's political transition."

"Persuading elements who are currently alienated from, or skeptical about, the transition process to compete politically is key to creating a political and security context that will inspire confidence among all Iraqis," Annan wrote.

Senior U.S. and Iraqi officials were privately skeptical of the overture and indicated it was unlikely to avert a military offensive on Fallujah and Ramadi, which commanders say could begin at any time.

Iraqi and American officials also cite the impending election as a reason to take military action. Fallujah has been controlled by insurgents since April. They also move freely in Ramadi, the provincial capital, 30 miles to the west. In most of the rest of the country, voter registration began this week, and officials say the legitimacy of an ostensibly nationwide ballot will be undermined if residents of the Sunni Triangle area cannot take part.

Iraq's Sunni Arab minority, geographically concentrated in the country's midsection, was favored under Saddam. But Sunnis were markedly underrepresented on the Governing Council put in place by the U.S.-led occupation and in the interim government that took power from the council in late June.

Elections could correct the imbalance, but many observers note that the country's majority Shiite Muslim population — long disenfranchised and eager to claim elected office — is better organized, larger, and pressing every advantage.

Nakhmi, the professor, emphasized that the Sunni groups behind the overture,

which gathered under the umbrella of the Iraqi National Founding Conference, include Shiites and Christians. But the bulk of the conference represents Sunni interests. They include the Iraqi Nationalist Party, which has put-Arab roots; the Democratic Reform Party, dominated by members of Saddam's Baath Party exiled to Syria; and the Association of Muslim Scholars, which claims to represent every Sunni mosque in Iraq, and has frequently endorsed calls for resistance.

"This initiative is very significant," said an official involved in establishing the transitional government, who asked not to be identified because of the sensitivity of the issue. "They're no longer saying, 'We're not participating because the country is occupied.' They're saying, 'The government is not right. The only way we can make it right is by elections.'"

"If you look at their demands, they're not impossible. They are things that can be discussed."

Most difficult for Iraqi and U.S. officials is the demand that American and other foreign forces remain outside major cities for the month of January. Security is a profound problem across Iraq, and Iraqi police and other forces have not proven themselves capable of bringing certain areas under control.

The picture is further complicated by the presence of foreign fighters intent on carrying out violent strikes. Despite strains with Iraqi insurgents motivated by nationalism, Fallujah residents have said the foreign fighters continue to blend among the indigenous resistance. Negotiations between Allawi's government and Fallujah leaders broke down over the city's inability or refusal to eject the fighters.

One advocate of the new initiative said that the Sunni groups behind the formerers to leave, though it may take time. He said attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces would dissipate sooner if significant numbers of former Baathists felt they have a stake in the "new Iraq."

Surge: When the tough get going, the going can get tough

SURGE, FROM PAGE 4

During last February's peak, about 54,000 soldiers and Marines bedded down in Kuwait camps en route to or from Iraq — enough to fill 63 percent of the beds in all of the Motel 6's in North America, Carra noted. In 2005, he said, troop numbers will top out at 46,000.

The peaks will be short spikes instead of long crunches. Every incoming unit already has been slotted into a camp.

"You can't compare where we were last December with where we are now," Carra said. "Because we've got a plan, we can worry less about crisis management."

For troops returning home, most will see far less of Kuwait than the last group. Carra said CFLCC is discouraging unit commanders from shutting soldiers through Kuwait if they don't need to be there.

He said many will fly straight home from Iraq on empty Air Force cargo jets. Others will spend only a day or two on the ground in Kuwait before hopping flights to the States or Germany.

"If you're not working, you go home," Carra said. "You don't need to sit around in Kuwait for three weeks, twiddling your thumbs."

James said CFLCC's goal by

next year's rotation is to calm the annual winter tidal wave of troops to a series of gentle troughs throughout the year. He said besides cutting stress on soldiers, planners and facilities, and it saves money.

If there's no surge, CFLCC doesn't have to pay for extra tents, trucks, cots and chow halls that are only needed part of the year. The last rotation, Carra said, was budgeted at \$184 million but actually cost about \$270 million. This year's is expected to cost \$200 million.

While James and Carra expect this winter's surge to run more smoothly, there's a wild card that can't be forgotten: the Iraqi insurgents waging war against U.S. and coalition forces.

Last winter, for reasons still not understood, rebels rarely harassed the convoys ferrying troops in and out of Iraq. Their bloody offensive didn't start until after the Surge. The insurgency is much hotter now. Planners can only hope they'll be lucky again.

"The enemy has a vote," Carra said. "Last winter," they chose to stay home."

E-mail Steve Liewer at: liewers@mail.estrimes.osd.mil

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SCOTT SCHONAUER/Stars and Stripes

Marines from the II Marine Expeditionary Force prepare to board a CH-46 helicopter from the USS Bataan in February. Two amphibious assault ships unloaded Marines and gear in Kuwait as part of a huge rotation of forces into Iraq. Officials are expecting a fewer number of troops than the 250,000 at the last surge to pass through Kuwait during the coming rotation.

Coalition helps Horn of Africa fight terror

New program teaches African troops how to work together to secure their countries

BY CHARLIE COON

Stars and Stripes

CAMP LEMONIER, Djibouti — With Camp Lemonier as its hub, the nations of the Horn of Africa are working together to fight terrorists.

"The quicker you can get away from national relationships and turn them into personal relationships, the better," said Marine Maj. Greg Beisbier. He is the action officer for a host nation coordinator program conducted by Coalition Sentinel, the U.S.-led effort to defend this part of the world from terrorism.

The program teaches troops from the various countries such things as ship courtesy and etiquette — to help them avoid offending one another and the secure passing of information, so bits of intelligence such as times, places and capabilities aren't overheard by the enemy.

Sitting in on briefings and accompanying U.S. troops on the job are also part of the training.

"It's not just bringing them in for tours of the ships and of the camp," said Beisbier, who is from Reedsville, Wis.

Last week, the program graduated its second set of four officers. They were Maj. Fredrick Musyimi of the Kenyan Navy, Ensign 2nd Class Abayem Tesfayoh of the Djiboutian Coast Guard, 2nd Lt. Takele Beyene of the Ethiopian Army, and Capt. Majid



CHARLIE COON/Stars and Stripes

Maj. Fredrick Musyimi of the Kenyan Navy, front, shakes hands with U.S. troops and others on Wednesday upon graduation from a one-week Coalition Sentinel program at Camp Lemonier, Djibouti. The graduates were taught how to train troops in their countries on topics of operational security, such as how to pass information and secure lines of communication.

Saleh Mansoor of the Yemen Coast Guard.

The Horn of Africa, where Djibouti is located, is strategically important because its waterways — the Red Sea and 17-mile-wide Strait of Bab el Mandeb — connect the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean.

The strait, which like the Panama Canal is a major shipping thoroughfare, is considered an ideal place to launch a terrorist attack against ships. The strait is also narrow enough for terrorists in a fast boat to flee from the Arabian Peninsula to Africa in just a few hours.

Djibouti, the former French colony on the African side of the strait, is surrounded by nations that have been their share of

flood, famine and the terrorists who take advantage of the weak.

"This [threat] is not new for our country," said Maj. Tsegaye Debela of the Ethiopian Air Force, one of the program's advisers.

When the final class graduates, 16 officers will have completed the course. After graduation, the officers, who are selected by their

nations to participate, will return home and train the troops there on what they learned.

Earlier Wednesday, the students were at computers at the intelligence center at Camp Lemonier, helping to devise a secure, inter-country Internet system so they could communicate in confidence.

The system, called CENTRIX, would be similar to the Secure Internet Protocol Routing system that the U.S. Department of Defense uses to send classified communication.

"It's a very good system for sharing information in a secure and safe way," said Mansoor, whose nation, Yemen, is across the strait from Djibouti.

"When it happens, it will save us effort and time. In our work, it may be just minutes between death and life."

"It's to share intelligence they can use to some common goal," said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Eric Hall of Portland, Ore., who is helping develop the system.

The goal, according to Marine Col. Craig S. Hudlister, chief of staff of the Djibouti-based Combined Joint Task Force — Horn of Africa, is to make the part of Africa secure and stable.

"And hopefully," he said, "to make this very unfriendly place for terrorists."

email: Charlie Coon at: coon@mail.stripes.osd.mil

Friends die together on battlefield in Iraq

Parents describe sons as best friends killed 'protecting the country that they loved'

BY TOM VERDIN

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — They played together in childhood, wrestled together in high school and joined the Marines together after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

This week, the two young men from California's San Joaquin Valley died together in a dangerous area of Iraq where the military is preparing a major assault on insurgents. Lance Cpl. Jared Hubbard, 22, of Clovis, and Cpl. Jeremiah Baro, 21, of Fresno, were remembered as close friends who wanted to do something honorable for their country.

"He's just so much to say. I don't know where to start," Hubbard's father, Jeff, said by telephone Friday as he described his son.

The family was notified of the deaths Thursday, but knew few details Friday.

The Defense Department said the Camp Pendleton-based Marines were killed Thursday in Anbar province, where the military was preparing for a massive offensive into the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah.

Baro's parents described Hub-



Lance Cpl. Jared Hubbard



Cpl. Jeremiah Baro

bard and their son as best friends who died "protecting the country that they loved."

"The pain of losing a son is overwhelming, and we feel as though we have lost two sons," Bert and Teresa Baro said in a statement Friday. "The loss we feel is unbearable. They will be in our hearts forever."

Hubbard and Baro were on their second tour in Iraq. They returned home briefly over the summer, then trained together as snip-

ers before returning to the battlefield.

They kept in touch with friends and told them conditions were more perilous when they returned. Brandon Sanchez, a friend of both, said Hubbard and Baro had a harder time determining who their enemies were.

"They said things over there were worse this time than before," Sanchez told The Fresno Bee. "They had been in some pretty bad gunfights."

They had known each other since childhood, and both joined the wrestling team at Buchanan High School in Clovis, a Fresno suburb.

Hubbard made varsity as a sophomore, wrestling seniors who were state champions in the 145-pound division, said Chris Hansen, his former coach.

"He was one of those kids you just love," said Hansen, now the school's athletic director. "He wasn't doing it because he was the best kid. He was doing it because he liked it."

After graduating from high school in 2001, Hubbard and Baro were inspired to join the Marines after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

They endured boot camp together but were sent to different regions of Iraq when the war started. They came together again after finishing sniper training and were based near Ramadi with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

Hubbard's family had a mixture of pride and apprehension about his decision to join the Marines.

"He was young and looking for something that was honorable to do in life," said his older brother, Jason. "He felt that was a calling he definitely could answer."

British concerns

LONDON — The commander of a British regiment that lost three soldiers in a suicide attack near Baghdad had expressed security concerns before his unit was redeployed to aid U.S. forces, a newspaper reported Saturday.

Black Watch commanding officer Lt. Col. James Cowan had written e-mails saying he expected "every lunatic terrorist from miles around to descend on us like bees to honey," the Daily Telegraph said.

The three soldiers and an Iraqi translator were killed in an insurgent suicide attack on Thursday.

The Black Watch had been sent to the high-risk area in central Iraq to free up U.S. forces for an expected assault on the militant stronghold of Fallujah.

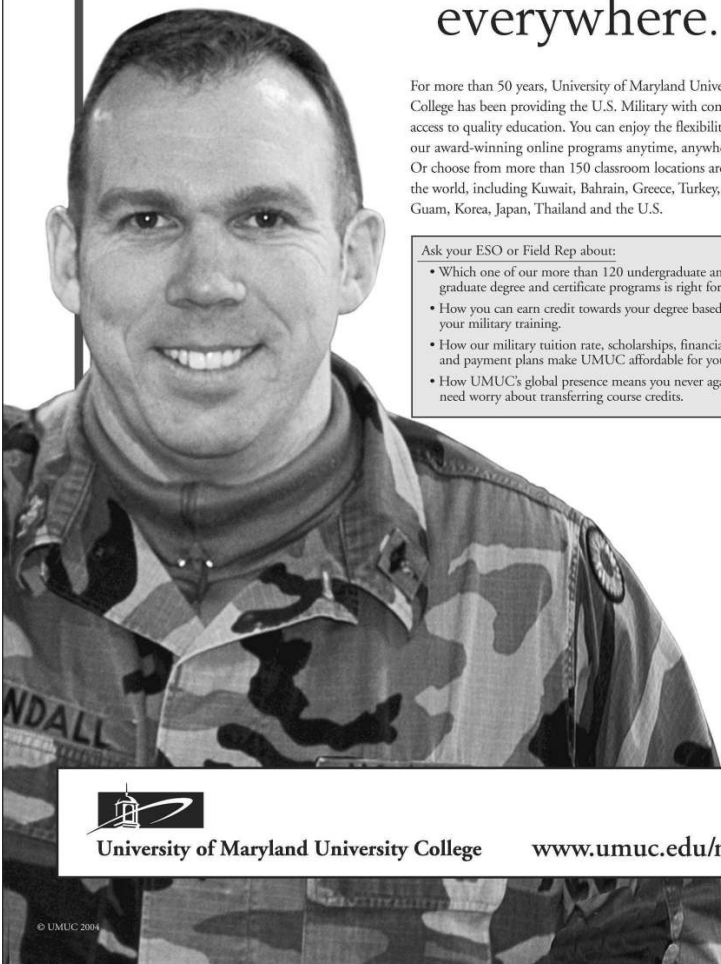
The deaths represented the worst combat loss suffered by British troops since Aug. 23, 2003, when three Royal Military Police were killed in southern Iraq.

The Ministry of Defense declined to discuss the report, saying, "We do not comment on uncorroborated documents or e-mails."

The newspaper, which did not specify to whom Cowan was writing, quoted his e-mail as saying, "I hope the government knows what it has got itself into. I'm not sure they fully appreciate the risks."

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Al-Zarqawi group calls for Hassan's release

Message says to free CARE director unless she's proven an enemy of Islam



The militant group al-Qaida in Iraq purportedly called Friday for the release of the kidnappers executive of the CARE charity, Margaret Hassan, and promised to free her if she fell into their hands.

BY NADIA ABOU EL-MAGD
The Associated Press

CAIRO, Egypt — The militant group al-Qaida in Iraq purportedly called Friday for the release of the kidnapped executive of the CARE charity, Margaret Hassan, and promised to free her if she fell into their hands.

In a message posted on the Internet, the group led by Jordanian terror mastermind Abu Musab al-Zarqawi said it wanted the world to know "if [the kidnappers of Margaret Hassan] handed us this captive, we will release her immediately unless it is proven she was conspiring against Muslims."

"We are demanding that those who are in charge of her release her unless she is proven to be an agent. If guilty, they should show that to everybody so as not to attribute something to our religion that is alien to it," the message said.

The authenticity of the statement could not be verified, but it was signed "al-Qaida in Iraq" and appeared on Web site known for publishing messages from Islamic militant groups. The person who posted it used the pseudonym Abu Maysara al-Iraqi —

the name usually associated with statements from al-Zarqawi's group.

The statement appeared three days after a video was broadcast in which Hassan's kidnappers said Britain had 48 hours to withdraw its troops from Iraq or they would transfer her to al-Qaida in Iraq.

Al-Qaida in Iraq, which until recently called itself Tawhid and Jihad, has claimed responsibility for beheading a number of Western hostages, such as the American businessman Nick Berg and the British civil engineer Kenneth Bigley. It also claimed a series of major vehicle bombings, such as the attack on the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad last year.

The director of CARE International in Iraq, Hassan, 59, was kidnapped Oct. 19 as she drove to work in Baghdad. Patients at a hospital run by CARE staged a small demonstration calling for the release of Hassan, who has Irish, British and Iraqi citizenship.

Videos of Hassan in captivity have been released, but no group has claimed responsibility for her abduction. In two of the videos, Hassan pleads for her life, saying she fears she will be beheaded.

For the first time in a statement purportedly from al-Zarqawi's band, Friday's message took pains to defend the group's actions, suggesting the militants wanted to distance themselves from their reputation as terrorists who kill hostages in cold blood and detonate car bombs that kill dozens of Iraqi civilians.

"We are not lovers of war or destruction," the statement said. "We don't adore blood and rejoice when it is spilled."

"We changed the plans for a number of decisive operations against the enemy because of the presence of a Muslim who would have been killed by the explosions, and we canceled martyrdom [suicide] operations out of concern for the blood of Muslim passers-by."

In a reference to Westerners and their Muslim critics, the message says: "When the infidels and apostates claim that the holy warriors are killing innocents and spilling their blood, this is a deceit of the mean."

The statement criticized the abduction of Hassan, saying: "God has taught us not to harm the women who don't fight us."

"Those who are using the captive as a playing card don't know our religion well," the statement added.

Allawi appeals for help from European Union

Iraq prime minister says pulling troops out encourages terrorists

BY PAUL AMES

The Associated Press Writer

BRUSSELS, Belgium — Iraq's U.S.-backed leader has made an impassioned plea for European nations divided by the war to reunite to help stabilize and rebuild his country.

Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi appealed to the European Union to build a "close and strategic partnership" with the new Iraq, and he urged NATO to accelerate plans to train 1,000 officers a year for the fledgling Iraqi military.

"Iraq is your best ally in the Middle East," Allawi told EU leaders Friday. "We need your help to succeed in building the freedom and democracy for which we are fighting."

The EU leaders responded with strong words of support and \$38.6 million offer to fund elections scheduled in January, including training for Iraqi vote monitors.

In their first meeting since President Bush won re-election on Tuesday, many European leaders stressed the need to overcome past differences over Iraq and strengthen the trans-Atlantic partnership.

"Our deep political, economic and cultural ties make us each other's natural and indispensable partners," EU leaders said in a statement.

However, French President Jacques Chirac — who clashed with Bush over Iraq — stressed the need for Europe to boost its standing to balance Washington's global clout.

"It is evident that Europe, now more than ever, must strengthen its unity and dynamism when faced with this great world power," Chirac said at the end of a two-day summit. "More than ever, we must reinforce Europe politically and economically."

In a statement on Iraq, all 25 EU leaders pledged to "support the brave and difficult course the people of Iraq are steering toward the restoration of security, democracy and the rule of law."

However, many saw a French snub when Chirac left the summit early, skipping the meeting with Allawi.

Chirac flew to Abu Dhabi to pay his respects to the new president of the United Arab Emirates, who took over following the death of his father Tuesday.

Chirac denied rebuffing Allawi.

"Our relation with the Iraqi authorities is excellent," Chirac told reporters, noting that Iraqi President Ghazi al-Yawer had accepted an invitation to meet him in Paris.

European diplomats, however, said that the French leadership was galvanized by Allawi's recent complaints that France and Germany were failing to sufficiently engage in efforts to end the turmoil in his country.

Allawi backed away from the comments. "I never said that Europe was a spectator," he told a news conference. "Europe has been very generous in supporting Iraqis."

He also urged European countries not to pull troops from Iraq,



European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana, right, gestures while speaking with Iraqi Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi during an EU summit at the EU Council building Friday in Brussels.

warning that would help the insurgents and damage reconstruction efforts.

"A decrease of multinational forces would affect adversely the situation in Iraq, would encourage terrorism, would encourage terrorists, and this is something that nobody wants really," he said.

In recent days, the Netherlands, Hungary and the Czech Republic have said they plan to pull troops out after the Iraqi elections.

Britain, Italy and Portugal said their forces would stay.

The EU statement said the bloc would speed up planning for "a possible integrated police, rule of law and civilian administration mission" expected to be launched after the elections.

The leaders said they would give additional funds for a security force to protect U.N. aid workers in Iraq.

They said Iraq should benefit from EU preferential trade status "as soon as conditions allow," adding that they would also consider canceling Iraq's debt.

Chirac's main partner in opposi-

ing the war stressed it was time Europe put the differences of the past behind it.

"Regardless how we stood on the war, we need to contribute to install democracy and security in Iraq," said German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder.

Schroeder noted that Germany is helping to train members of the Iraqi police and military in the Emirates and has declared its readiness to consider "substantial debt relief."

British Prime Minister Tony Blair also said it was time for those who opposed the war to "move on."

Sniper competition uses real battlefield scenarios

BY ELLIOTT MINOR
The Associated Press

FORT BENNING, Ga. — Cpl. Eugenio Mendoza, a young veteran of the Iraq war, had to carry his buddy for 50 yards, scale an 8-foot wall and crawl through a water-logged tunnel at the 4th International Sniper Competition, where the challenges are designed to simulate combat scenarios in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"It's good stuff we never thought about," said Mendoza, 27, a sniper with the Army's 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Ky. "We're definitely going back and use what we've learned in these events."

Sponsored by the sniper school, the five-day competition that ended Friday is designed to test the marksmen's ability to fire at targets up to 800 meters away, to stalk and conceal themselves, to fire from a variety of positions after strenuous physical exertion and to quickly pick out a villain holding hostages and then deliver a lethal shot.

The competitors included 18 Army and Air Force teams from as far away as Alaska and two teams from the Canadian Army.

Staff Sgt. Larry Davis, sergeant in charge of the competition, said the military is putting more emphasis on snipers.

"The leaders realize that we're the eyes and ears for them. A sniper team is like the perfect smart bomb," Davis said. "We're out front and, based on a command decision, we can take out the threat. And we're not flying a \$30 million airplane."

One of the new events added this year was firing from a helicopter. It proved to be a challenge for the shooters and the pilots, organizers said.

"All these are based on scenarios that are going on," said Sgt. 1st Class Frank Velez of the Army's Sniper School at Fort Benning. "This is not just about winning a trophy. It's sharing the knowledge. The end result is doing your job."

Mendoza's partner, Cpl. Nicholas Romero, another Iraq war veteran from the 101st Airborne, said the competition was challenging.

"I learned a lot from the other teams," said Romero, a Cocoa Beach, Fla., native.

Master Sgt. Cecil Lay, an Air Force sniper training supervisor from Camp Robinson, Ark., said the Air Force has stepped up its sniper training and now has two female snipers, a job traditionally reserved for men.

"With all the stuff going on in the war, the Air Force is getting the need for the same training as the Army," Lay said.

Spouse hiring program now will go Armywide

BY JESSICA INIGO
Stars and Stripes

A U.S. European Command job hiring pilot program tested on spouses in Europe will now be used Armywide, according to U.S. Army Europe officials.

The Military Spouse Preference Choice initiative will become the plan family members use worldwide when vying for jobs on Army installations.

The new program will take spouses' names out of databases for automatic job filling and allow them to accept or decline temporary positions without losing their military spouse preference, according to Patricia Rothrock, a human resources specialist in Seckenheim, Germany.

During a telephone interview Friday, Rothrock said that previously in the States and elsewhere, when applicants seeking work were listed as "qualified" for a position and offered the job, they had to either accept it or lose their spouse preference for hiring all together.

Donna Best, a human resources specialist, created the pilot program 2½ years ago during an Army Family Action Plan meeting, Rothrock said.

She said it was created to help spouses continue to work in intermittent jobs while waiting for a permanent position to open. The idea was then instituted at

the Civilian Personnel Operations Center for USAREUR as a pilot program, she said.

According to a USAREUR release, under the new program military spouses can use their spouse preference to accept or decline temporary jobs until they get a permanent position, also known as a "continuing position."

The release said spouses could work in these temporary, or non-continuing positions, and then use their hiring preference to get a new job beginning 60 days before the temporary job expires.

Military spouses who have lost their preference because of accepting or denying a temporary position will have their preference reinstated, but only if the spouse meets all other applicable requirements for military spouse preference, according to the USAREUR statement.

"Now spouses have a choice," Rothrock said. "If something temporary comes up that they're qualified for, but they don't really like the position or where it's at, they can decline the job without losing their spouse preference for future job offers."

However, the USAREUR release said, military spouses who previously accepted or declined a permanent position would not have their preference reinstated.

E-mail Jessica Inigo at: inigoj@mail.strips.esd.mil

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IN THE WORLD

Palestinian factions meet to plan future

BY IBRAHIM BARZAK
The Associated Press

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia made a rare visit to the Gaza Strip on Saturday for talks with rival Palestinian groups aimed at preserving calm in the face of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's dire condition.

With Arafat ailing in a French hospital, Qureia and other Palestinian officials have held a flurry of meetings in case he dies. While Islamic militants have made public shows of unity, Hamas and other opposition groups said they were also looking for a formal role in Palestinian decision making.

Qureia arrived in Gaza under heavy guard and accompanied by

Parliament Speaker Raufi Fattouh, who would step in as a caretaker president of the Palestinian Authority if Arafat dies.

Eight vehicles full of security forces joined his motorcade, roads were closed, and dozens of Palestinian police guarded the area. In his year as prime minister, Qureia has traveled to the volatile Gaza Strip only two or three times.

The situation is particularly delicate in Gaza, where rival groups of gunmen and security officials have fought each other in the streets, jockeying for power ahead of Israel's planned withdrawal from the coastal strip in 2005.

Qureia met for four hours with representatives of the 13 major Palestinian factions, including

Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as well as security chiefs, lawmakers and officials of Arafat's Fatah faction. Such a broad gathering is extremely rare.

After the meeting, Qureia said the security commanders had committed to a "joint security plan ... to ensure security and order." He said the participating groups "reiterated the importance" of working together with the Palestinian government "to reach a national program and a national plan and to achieve a political partnership."

Qureia told reporters he was encouraged by the meeting and vowed to continue the dialogue. The meeting focused on political issues, the shaky security situation in the Palestinian territories and finding a way to share decision making.



Palestinian Prime Minister Ahmed Qureia, center, heads a meeting with different Palestinian factions Saturday in Gaza City. Qureia traveled to the Gaza Strip on Saturday for talks with rival Palestinian groups aimed at preserving calm during Yasser Arafat's absence, Qureia's office said.

Iraq beheadings inspiring militants across the globe

BY LOUIS MEIXLER
The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — It was called "Operation Baghdad" and, to be sure, the headless bodies of the three police officers recalled the violence in that city. But these attacks happened in Haiti, not in Iraq.

The brutal beheadings in Iraq appear to have inspired militants in other parts of the world who are drawn to the shock value of the horrifying attacks and the intense publicity they attract.

Thailand and the Netherlands are two other countries where suspected extremists recently beheaded or slit the throats of their victims in what appear to be copycat attacks.

Rime Allaf, associate fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, said beheadings are spreading because the practice "has so horrified us in the West."

"It achieves results and it makes the headlines," Allaf added.

The horrifying tactic has spread as far as the Caribbean island of nation of Haiti, where loyalists of ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide seized on the Iraq beheadings as a symbol of strength and intimidation.

The headless bodies of three police officers were found in Port-au-Prince early last month, and authorities said the militants had launched a terror campaign called "Operation Baghdad."

Nobody claimed responsibility for the decapitations, but Haitian supporters echoed that thought.

"We'll be in the streets until death or Aristide comes back," protester Milo Fenelon said a few days later.

"We won't stop. If they come in here, we're going to cut off their heads. It's going to be just like Baghdad."

In Thailand this week, a Buddhist village leader was beheaded after being shot in the chest. A note was left on his body saying his slaying was to avenge the killing of Muslim rioters by government forces.

And in Amsterdam, a suspected Islamic extremist shot and killed Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh, then slit his throat. A note was left impaled by a knife on his body quoting from the Quran and threatening more killings.

"It's an ideal terrorist tool," said Jonathan Stevenson, senior fellow for counterterrorism at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Washington.

"It is a horrifying image and I would say it is disproportionately frightening."

The first beheading by Islamic militants in Iraq was the slaying in May of American civilian Nicholas Berg. The killers posted a video on the Internet showing them pushing a bound Berg to his side, putting a large knife to his neck and cutting off his head as a scream sounded, and the killers shouted "Allahu akbar!" — "God is great!"

Since then, at least 12 foreigners, including three other Americans, have been beheaded in Iraq as part of a wave of kidnappings. Videos and the Internet were used to distribute the horrifying images across the world, compounding the shock value.

"I think the main reason for the beheadings was true shock and awe," Allaf said.

"These people are extremely media savvy."



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IN THE STATES

Bush details new agenda in radio address

Reiterates need for Social Security reform, war on terror while urging bipartisanship

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush is striking twin themes for a second term, vowing to fight hard for his political agenda while reaching across the aisle to Democrats.

"Americans are expecting bipartisan effort and results," Bush said Saturday in his weekly radio address. "My administration will work with both parties ... to achieve those results, and to meet the responsibility we share."

Offering some words of conciliation, he said Republicans and Democrats can agree to aggressively pursue the war on terror, with every citizen having a stake in the outcome.

The challenge to working together, Bush suggested, will come on the domestic front.

"We must confront the junk and frivolous lawsuits that are driving up the cost of health care and hurting doctors and patients," he said. "We must continue to work on education reform to bring high standards and accountability, not just

to elementary schools, but to the high schools as well."

Democrats challenge Republican claims that frivolous lawsuits are on the rise and have successfully blocked reforms in Congress.



Bush

Doctors say ballooning malpractice insurance rates are a problem nationwide, and physicians have staged protests or walkouts in several states.

Lawsuit reform was a major issue in the presidential campaign, with Bush focusing on the fact that Kerry running mate John Edwards was a trial lawyer who sued doctors.

Bush's proposed education reforms may face the same criticism that he faced in his first term with the No Child Left Behind

Pelosi: Dems 'ready to work with' Bush

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Days after her party lost congressional seats and the White House race, California Rep. Nancy Pelosi struck a conciliatory tone, saying House Democrats "stand ready to work with" President Bush in his second term.

The message from the House minority leader, speaking Saturday in the weekly Democratic radio address, was in stark contrast to the pre-election combative tone of late September when she used the same forum to call Bush's Iraq war a "grotesque mistake."

Now in the immediate aftermath of a bitterly fought election, Pelosi summoned Republican cooperation on initiatives she said both parties should support — better jobs, health care and education. She called for "more discourse and less discord" in the Congress but still pledged to not budge on issues where the two parties diverge.

"There are places where we differ, as well, and Democrats will stand our ground," Pelosi said.

Tuesday's election resulted in Republican gains of four seats in the Senate and at least three in the House.

Pelosi cited Bush's agenda for reforming Social Security — which includes giving younger workers the option of putting part of their payroll tax into personal retirement accounts — as a privatization plan that would end up cutting benefits for seniors and the disabled.



Pelosi

Describing the country as one divided along partisan lines, Pelosi said the split, "rather than being an excuse for inaction, must be a call to compromise and common sense. ... I hope that in this term President Bush will fulfill his renewed promise to be a uniter, not a divider."

Act: a good idea that was insufficiently funded by the administration and Congress.

The president stressed another issue with skepticism at home and abroad, promoting freedom and democracy in the Middle East. Those goals are "the alternatives

to tyranny and terror," he said.

Bush also promised to take on the special interest-clogged issue of reforming the tax code, a step he said the nation must take to get rid of needless paperwork and to make the economy more competitive.

He also committed his administration in its second term to altering the Social Security system, which he said must be addressed by allowing taxpayers to invest part of their Social Security contributions in private accounts if they wish.

Man gets 16 months after stealing patient's identity

BY GENE JOHNSON
The Associated Press Writer

SEATTLE — A technician at a cancer center has been sentenced to 16 months in prison for stealing the identity of a gravely ill patient, who spent months trying to clear his name while the disease ravaged his body.

The technician, Richard W. Gibson, 42, is the first person in the nation sentenced under a new law designed to protect patients' privacy, federal prosecutors said.

He also will be required to pay at least \$15,000 in restitution, including reimbursing patient Eric Drew for the time and money he spent trying to clear his name.

"This court considers your behavior in this case to be some of the most deplorable I've seen in 15 years on the bench," U.S. District Judge Ricardo Martinez told Gibson.

The sentence was four months longer than prosecutors requested.

Drew, 37, said that while he was lying in a hospital bed, dying from cancer and weak from chemotherapy, he began to get mail thanking him for opening accounts he knew nothing about.

After a maddening six months of calling the companies, police, reporters and collection agencies, Drew discovered that Gibson, a technician at the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, where he received the first of his two bone marrow transplants, had stolen his identity.

Drew, a mortgage banker from Los Gatos, Calif., recently had his second bone-marrow transplant at the University of Minnesota medical center.

"I felt completely ignored, frustrated and totally violated," he said in a videotaped statement played in court Friday. "Nobody seemed to empathize or care about this situation whatsoever, and my doctors and family wanted me to drop it because they were worried about the huge amount of stress this was placing on me. They were afraid it would actually cause my impending bone marrow transplant to fail."

The identity theft consumed his life and made it impossible for him to continue to raise money for bone marrow drives, charities and individual patients. He previously had raised \$250,000 for such causes, he said.



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GOP headquarters in North Carolina vandalized

RALEIGH, N.C. — Vandals spray painted vulgar messages on the walls of the North Carolina Republican Party headquarters and left a burned effigy depicting President Bush and Sen. John Kerry, police said.

Authorities detained several suspects early Saturday, hours after the attacks took place Friday night, but had not filed any charges, police spokesman Jim Sughrue said.

A police officer reported Friday that about 100 people wearing masks and gloves were walking down a street near the headquarters.

From The Associated Press

'A passion to ride and the bond of our faith'

Jewish bikers rally support on the road

BY ELINOR J. BRECHER

The Miami Herald

MIAMI — From a distance, they look like any other squadron of bikers out for a Sunday ride: leather chaps, flashy motorcycles, piratical bandanas. But pull up next to the King David Bikers and you will see T-shirts reading "100 percent kosher all-beef biker," gold chais (chairs is Hebrew for "life") dangling from ears, Israeli flags whipping alongside U.S. flags and a two-tone bike with "Harley Ben David" painted on it.

Jewish bikers? Why not? "We share a passion to ride and the bond of our faith," said club president Jeff Mustard, 45, who is advertising and public relations for an investment firm.

Mustard said with 105 members, the King David Bikers are the biggest Jewish motorcycle club in Florida, drawing doctors, lawyers, retirees, S&P-seeking-SIMs-with-wheels and a middle-aged woman who will not give her name because their parents would plotz if they knew their

nice Jewish daughter rode a motorcycle.

Founded last spring, the club joins the growing international ranks of Jewish biker groups, including the New York Chai Riders, Hillel's Angels, Members of the Tribe, the YOWs — Yidden on Wheels — and SOBs — Semites on Bikes.

One recent Sunday, the club's spiritual leader, Rabbi Zachary Betesh, muscled a hefty leather saddle bag onto a table at JP Bisno, a kosher restaurant in Hollywood, Fla.

The day before, he had led an Orthodox Shabbat service at a Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Chabad center.

The club meets at the restaurant Sunday mornings to nosh, kabbitz and study scripture before setting their helmets over their yarmulkes and roaring off wherever they decide to go.

"Who wants to daven [pray]?" asked Betesh, 48. Five men stepped forward for others headed for the breakfast buffet and still others went to check out the Bik-

ers With Chutzpah caps and Jewz Who Cruise mugs for sale.

Inside the saddle bag: *tefillin*, *talisman* and a downsized Torah scroll.

Teffilin are the leather boxes containing prayers attached to leather straps. Talisman are prayer shawls. Observant Jewish men use both for morning worship.

Betesh helped one of the men wrap tefillin around his arm. The worshippers faced east, began to chant and rock back and forth.

"All prayer should come from the heart," Betesh counseled. "This is the prayer that God hears."

This day, Betesh was not riding because he had to perform a wedding. He had pulled up in a mammoth black Humvee. In addition to a 2002 Ultra Classic, he also owns a 1996 Harley Fatboy.

It was a conventional wedding, he explained, "but someday I want to perform the first Orthodox Jewish biker wedding in South Florida."

A Long Islander, he has been



MIAMI HERALD/KRT

The King David Bikers is a Jewish motorcycle club that meets on Sundays in Hollywood, Fla., to eat, pray and go for a ride.

riding since college, which he attended on a wrestling scholarship. He joined the club last August, after someone in his Lubavitch congregation mentioned hearing a bunch of Jewish bikers were looking for a spiritual leader.

The Brooklyn-born Mustard, who rides a Yamaha Road Star Silverado, started the club because

he did not feel much of a connection to other bikers.

"I'd go to various meetings, mostly at bars, and found a not very welcoming environment, like I was the new kid at the bus stop," said charter member Irvin Zagoria, 47, a retirement planner from Plantation: "Everybody here is like family."



Jim Matthews and his wife, Eileen Matthews, go for a walk along 100th Street next to the fence containing the Love Canal site in Niagara Falls, N.Y., late last month. Measuring the health effects on Love Canal neighborhood residents from the seeping chemical waste that forced the area's evacuation more than two decades ago has been difficult.

Love Canal health study may offer no answers

BY CAROLYN THOMPSON

The Associated Press

NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y. — The Love Canal neighborhood's recent exit from the Superfund list came with assurances that any environmental effects from the seeping chemical waste that forced its evacuation more than two decades ago had been addressed.

Measuring the health effects on the people who lived there has been a different matter.

A state Health Department study of birth defects, cancer rates and deaths among former Love Canal residents has stretched into a seventh year and cost at least \$3 million.

The Health Department says it is committed to finishing the federally funded study, initially expected to take five to six years.

But already some former Love Canal residents — even some working on the study — are expressing doubts about its reliability and wondering aloud whether it has been worth the time and money.

The study's preliminary findings indicate no spikes in cancer or death rates and minimal, if any, effects on births.

"It's just not going to be conclusive," said Patricia Grenzy, who grew up in Love Canal and is part of an expert panel advising the Health Department. "I think there was a lot of hard work put into this. It's just going to be hard to pinpoint a lot of things."

The neighborhood was built on and around a canal that for years was used as a chemical dump, and by the 1960s and '70s contaminated groundwater was leaching into back yards and school grounds.

President Carter declared a federal emergency in 1978 and 1980, which led to the evacuation of some 900 families and the bulldozing of an elementary school and two streets built on the canal and the 21,800 tons of chemical byproducts it holds.

Passage of the 1980 Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, known as Superfund, soon followed.

After standing for years as an eerie ghost town of abandoned schools, churches and houses with left-behind family portraits on the walls and curtains in the windows, some of the homes were revitalized and re-inhabited. Others were bulldozed and the land deemed safe only for industry.

The canal and the 21 tons of chemical waste it still holds now are buried under a thick clay cap, a high-density liner and topsoil, and surrounded by a barrier drainage system.

Grenzy and others point to limitations within existing state and federal databases from which virtually all the information for the study is being culled. The "passive data collection" from cancer, mortality and birth defects registries required no direct participation from the roughly 6,100 former residents included in the study.

The department has acknowledged shortcomings in the process, saying that even if unusual health patterns were found, they could not necessarily be linked to the chemical exposure — the very goal of the study.

"Every epidemiological study has limitations," read a September update posted on the DOE Web site with the release of preliminary birth results. "If an effect could not be found, it could mean there was none or it might indicate that we could not identify one."

And, the update continued, "observing an effect does not prove a relationship existed between any potential exposure and the health effect."

Heating oil prices soar in Northeast

The Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine — The scary news surfaced around Halloween, a time when the sounds of thermostats kicking in and furnaces firing up echo in homes across New England, heralding the onset of colder weather.

The average price of No. 2 heating oil in Maine had surpassed the \$2-a-gallon mark for the first time ever. Whether prices will continue to rise — and if so, by how much — is anyone's guess, experts say.

The latest weekly survey by the State Planning Office found that heating oil had gone up 2 cents per gallon to \$2.01, a 31-cent jump over the previous month and 72 cents higher than at this time last year.

Prices were even higher to the south: \$2.07 in Connecticut and Rhode Island, and \$2.04 in Massachusetts. It was \$2.01 in Vermont and \$1.94 in New Hampshire.

The rise in world oil prices, with benchmark crude oil futures hitting \$55 a barrel before falling back in recent days, resonates strongly in Maine, whose reliance on oil for home heating is thought to be the nation's highest.

The Northeast is the nation's biggest heating oil market. In Maine, where natural gas distribution lines cover only a limited area, more than 400,000 homes, or 80 percent of the total, rely on oil as their primary source of heat.

Typical house uses 850 to 900 gallons a year, according to the Maine Oil Dealers Association.

Rich candidates dug deep into fortunes but fell short

BY MALIA RULON
The Associated Press

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Of the 22 candidates who each spent more than \$1 million of their own money trying to win their first election to Congress, only one made it.

The lesson, say analysts, is that ready cash is less important than experience and whether voters perceive wealthy candidates as "one of them."

"Millionaires don't automatically win," said Herb Asher, a political science professor at Ohio State University. "The money just gives them instant credibility and puts them in the position to be able to run in the first place."

The sole victor was former federal prosecutor Michael McCaul, who won in a Texas district once represented by Lyndon B. Johnson.

The biggest loser — in terms of

money — was securities trader Blair Hull, who spent nearly \$29 million trying for a Senate seat but lost in the Illinois Democratic primary to Barack Obama.

The reasons the other 20 lost after spending a total exceeding \$40 million differ widely. Some ran against popular incumbents, some duked it out against other millionaires in their state's primary election, and a few ran close and credible races only to come up short at the very end.

Democratic Senators Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, Barbara Mikulski of Maryland and Chris Dodd of Connecticut easily swept past their wealthy challengers. "If they are running against strong incumbents who can raise their own money, that can make a big difference," Asher said.

A campaign finance rule that went into effect this year helped the incumbents by allowing those running against millionaires to

raise from donors up to \$6,000 a person — three times the normal ceiling on individual contributions to a single candidate.

In Texas, McCaul, a former counterterrorism specialist in the Justice Department, had the experience — and the cash. McCaul spent about \$2 million from his own pocket to defeat millionaire Ben Streussand, a Houston-area mortgage banker, in a Republican runoff primary election. Since there was no Democratic candidate, McCaul won election to the House.

Stanley Renshon, a political psychologist at the City University of New York, said it often comes down to whether voters perceive the millionaires as one of them.

"We don't mind people making money, but we don't like people who make money and think they are better than us. The secret is to be rich but not snobby."

Governor's race in Washington still not settled

BY DAVID AMMONS
The Associated Press

OLYMPIA, Wash. — Three days after Election Day, Democratic Christine Gregoire clung to a narrow lead Friday in the nation's last undecided race for governor — a cliffhanger contest that could drag on for weeks while the votes are counted.

With most of the state's 39 counties reporting additional votes, Gregoire, Washington's attorney general, led Republican former state Sen. Dino Rossi by 5,500 votes, a difference of less than a quarter of 1 percentage point. Nearly 2.4 million ballots have been counted.

A Gregoire victory would mean the Democrats would preserve their 22 governorships nationwide. The Republicans already are assured of at least maintaining their 28.

The counties believe they have about 400,000 additional ballots to count this week and next. The deadline for counties to certify is Nov. 17.

Gregoire and Rossi have stayed out of sight since Election Day, resting and spending time with their families while they await the verdict.

"We are definitely optimistic that as more of the later absentee come in, we will continue to trend upward," said Rossi spokeswoman Mary Lane.

Gregoire campaign adviser

Christian Sinderman said: "We remain cautiously optimistic. The investment in turning out Democratic absentee voters seems to be paying off in the late ballot count."

Rossi and GOP groups hit Gregoire hard over a costly mistake in the attorney general's office that resulted in the state having to pay a multimillion-dollar judgment.

Gregoire, 57, playing up her experience in serving three terms as attorney general and her role in securing a settlement of over \$200 million from Big Tobacco to compensate states for health care costs. She is seeking to become only the second woman governor in state history.

Rossi, 45, a real estate agent and self-made millionaire, was known for crafting a no-new-taxes state budget during a deep recession.

A third candidate, Libertarian Ruth Bennett, has played a potential spoiler role. The Seattle businesswoman ran as an "out" lesbian who advocated gay marriage, tailoring her message to Seattle liberals who otherwise would have voted for Gregoire.

The ballot count in Washington state is complicated by the fact that most residents cast absentee ballots through the mail.

A recount is automatic if the race ends up within one-half of percentage point apart and within 2,000 votes.



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Calif. 'mystery candidate' wins school board spot

BY BEN FOX
The Associated Press

SANTA ANA, Calif. — Steve Rocco didn't file a candidate statement or mount a campaign for the school board. He's unknown to teachers and the district and only barely known to his neighbors.

Nonetheless, the man being called a "mystery candidate" easily beat an opponent who is active, and relatively well known, in the Orange Unified School District.

Now all that's left is to find him. Rocco provided little information about himself in his candidate filings. He ignored mail from district officials and the teachers' union during the campaign. When the PTA sent him an invitation to a candidate forum, the letter came back unopened.

Rocco ran for mayor of Santa Ana in 2000 and raised eyebrows then as well. He declined to provide personal information or to discuss the campaign, and showed up at a candidate forum

dressed in camouflage and sunglasses. He came in last place, with 12 percent of the vote.

What might have helped him this time around was that he identified himself as a writer/educator on the ballot, though he offered no proof of those occupations.

He is 53 and was born in Italy, according to his voter registration, where he declined to state his party affiliation. The candidate didn't bother with a ballot statement outlining his platform. If he shows up to the monthly meetings of the district, Rocco will receive \$750 per month. But officials are wondering what they will do if he is as scarce in office as he was during the campaign.

He will be one of seven board members in charge of setting policy for a district that has a budget of \$230 million and serves nearly 32,000 students at 42 schools in Orange and surrounding cities.

Rocco, who has no children and whose job is uncertain, won with nearly 54 percent of the vote.

Border produce

AZ PHOENIX — Federal inspectors loosened restrictions on Mexican produce at some ports of entry in Arizona, state agricultural officials said.

Tighter inspection requirements had been placed on Mexican produce after a Medfly outbreak began in Tijuana, Mexico, south of San Diego. All shipments coming across the U.S.-Mexico border were being inspected for Medflies, which can attack more than 250 kinds of fruits, nuts and vegetables.

With the change in restrictions Wednesday, importers will still need to demonstrate that produce didn't originate in Tijuana, but thorough inspections will be done only on one in 20 shipments at most Arizona ports of entry.

The looser restrictions affect crops stretching from Lukeville to Texas.

Heavier inspection requirements, however, will remain in San Luis, south of Yuma, and ports of entry to the west. They will also apply to crops considered a high risk.

Campaign of inaction

AR SPRINGDALE — Want to get elected to the Springdale City Council? Don't spend a dime or give a speech, say you're too busy to campaign, then drop out of the race.

Hey, it worked for Mike Overton.

"I didn't have time to do any campaigning and spent no money on campaigning," the Springdale real estate salesman said.

Overton defeated Rex Bailey for the spot with 53 percent of the vote. Bailey, who captured 47 percent, said he raised more than \$12,000.

"I ran as hard as I could," Bailey said. "He beat me. I congratulated him."

Overton withdrew from the race in October, saying he didn't have time to serve because of his business interests. But the ballots were printed before that announcement.

Overton says he'll take the job anyway.

"After what I consider to be a mandate, considering the circumstances, I think it's my obligation to serve after the confidence the average citizens have placed with me," Overton said. "I'm humbled and, at the same time, ecstatic over the outcome."

Committed citizen

PA HARRISBURG — Dr. Andrea Shaer, in labor with her third child, wanted to vote before she went to the delivery room.

But with more than 100 people lined up at the polling station at Penn State Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, Shaer changed her mind.

Shaer, a nephrologist, or kidney doctor, gave birth to a son, Jack, and returned to vote Tuesday night 30 minutes before the polls closed, intravenous drip in tow.

"Knowing how close the race is in Pennsylvania and being a mom, with all the issues there, I just had to try" to vote, Shaer said.

Shaer works at the medical cen-



ter. She awoke at 5 a.m. Tuesday when her water broke.

Artistic dispute

HI HONOLULU — A federal official is calling Bishop Museum's 2000 transfer of sacred artifacts to a Native Hawaiian group a "sham."

The review committee that oversees the Native American Graves and Protection Act announced it will meet in March to reconsider whether the museum and properly transferred the 83 funerary objects, which are now reportedly buried in Forbes Cave on the Big Island.

On Tuesday, the NAGPRA panel held a teleconference so museum representatives and Native Hawaiian groups in Honolulu could discuss the dispute involving 13 groups who claim family or cultural ties to the artifacts.

The artifacts were taken from Kawaihae cave on the Big Island in 1905 by David Forbes and sold to the Bishop Museum.

The museum had the artifacts in its possession until the late 1990s, when they were loaned to the Native Hawaiian group Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawaii Nei, an organization that oversees perpetual care of Native Hawaiian remains. Instead of returning the items to the museum, the Native Hawaiian group said it put the objects back in the caves.

Let the beer flow

ME CORINTH — After more than 70 years with outlawed alcohol sales within town limits, voters in this Pensacola County burgh have approved a referendum to strike down the

prohibition.

Residents voted 753-730 Tuesday in favor of the referendum to permit the operation of state and agency liquor stores. Several towns in Maine, including at least five others in Penobscot County, do not allow alcohol sales.

"I did not expect it to pass," said Ron Wilcox, a resident who voted against the ballot item. "It's kind of interesting that if 12 people had decided to vote the other way, it wouldn't have."

The referendum was the second time in less than six months that residents had voted on the alcohol issue. A similar vote to lift the alcohol ban failed by a vote of 402-334 in June.

Finally put away

MN MINNEAPOLIS — After 23 alcohol-related driving offenses in as many years, Raymond J. Sherman finally is going to prison.

He'd been drinking and driving for years, hadn't had a driver's license since 1984 and was released from jail in March after serving a 16-month drunken-driving sentence.

But it wasn't until he was charged in June with felony drunken driving and pleaded guilty in October that he faced prison time.

Before the law changed in 2002, drunken driving was a misdemeanor, no matter how many times an offender was convicted.

This week, Sherman, 42, of Apple Valley, Minn., was sentenced to five years and three months in prison by Judge Harry Crump.

Hacker indictment

TX AUSTIN — A former University of Texas student was indicted on charges he hacked into the school's computer system and stole Social Security numbers and other personal information from more than 37,000 students and employees.

In a four-count indictment announced Wednesday, Christopher Andrew Phillips, 21, was charged with fraud and storing credit card and bank account information with intent to defraud. He allegedly hacked into the system in February and March 2003.

Phillips was not accused of using the information for illegal purposes, and his attorney, Allan Williams, said his client had no criminal intent.

Moving along nicely

MI MUSKOGON — After an early end to its inaugural season, the Lake Express high-speed ferry that crossed Lake Michigan in 2½ hours is getting a rave review from Michigan tourism officials.

"We all had visions of what we thought might happen and in the end, the first season was a banner year for all involved," said Cindy Larsen, president of the Muskegon Area Chamber of Commerce. The \$18 million ferry began making the 76-mile run between Milwaukee and Muskegon beginning June 1. It has a capacity of 250 passengers and 46 vehicles.



Quick reflexes Megan Luevano heads the ball while sitting on the bench during the varsity girls' practice at the Riner Steinhoff Soccerplex in Alamogordo, N.M.



Sticky fun Benjamin Mott laughs after being bombarded with whipped-cream covered marshmallows during the annual fall festival at the Boys and Girls Club of Glynn in Brunswick, Ga.



Smile enlargement Grace Harris, 7, delights in the magnifying qualities of a sheet magnifier as she plays inside Edwardsville 8th precinct in the Madison Mutual Insurance Building in Edwardsville, Ill.



Youthful artist Shawnee Smith is silhouetted against the late afternoon sun as she paints a mural on the wall of the courtyard of the Harmony Elementary School in Harmony Township, N.J.



Desert snowstorm Chris Worthen, of Amarillo, Texas, rides his bike on a snowy trail near Amarillo, Texas.

Truck door kills man

PA GOULDSBORO — A man drove his pickup truck into a group of people outside a bar, killing one person and wounding two others, police said.

Leroy William Hill, of Bath, drove his truck into a group of patrons who had followed him and his friend, Devin Brown, out of Barb and Ron's Gouldsboro Inn, police said.

The two men went to the bar and later told investigators that some patrons were giving them strange looks and making comments, according to police. Brown told police they felt uncomfortable and decided to leave.

Hill said he put the truck in reverse and then put it in drive and drove off. But the passenger door was open and it struck several people, police said, killing Arthur Rega, 40, of Gouldsboro.

Hill faces three felony counts of aggravated assault, three misdemeanor counts of simple assault, three misdemeanor counts of reckless endangerment, and one felony count each of vehicular homicide and being involved in an accident involving death or bodily injury.

Cop action goes wrong

TX FORT WORTH — A man who tried to elude Fort Worth police has died after police used an electrical stun gun on him.

Robert Guerrero, 21, was pronounced dead Tuesday night at John Peter Smith Hospital, where he was taken after he stopped breathing.

He was subdued with a Taser after police were called to an apartment complex where residents said someone was illegally hooking up electrical service at a unit.

Recycling dinner

CA BERKELEY — Haute cuisine is going green in a program that recycles restaurant and household food scraps into high-grade compost for Northern California farms and vineyards.

More than 2,200 restaurants and food businesses and 75,000 households in San Francisco take part in the clean-plate, clean-environment project, which began on an experimental basis in the late 1990s and has since become a national model for food recycling.

From Candlestick Park to Fisherman's Wharf, table scraps are deposited in green plastic cans and then converted into Four Course Compost.

The result is less waste in landfills, lower garbage pickup costs, vibrant vines and vegetables — and a cheerful sense of completing a circle.

Schools: Joy or humbug?

ME SCARBOROUGH — A parents group pushing for a little holiday spirit has begun a campaign to bring Christmas celebrations back to Maine schools.

The group, which says classrooms are lacking carols and festive decorations in December, has spent weeks meeting with school administrators to stir their cause.

"We just want the kids to be comfortable and enjoy who they are and where they come from," said Lisa Lowry, one of the parents in the group.

Public schools nationwide have long wrestled with how to handle Christmas.

The current holiday policy acknowledges "it is neither possible nor desirable for our schools to simply ignore religion," he said.

Armored turf

IL CHICAGO — A ground-skeeper found a rusted, hollowed-out shell of a grenade in the right-field turf of Chicago's Wrigley Field.

The dud was found Tuesday morning by a worker at the home of the Chicago Cubs. The police's Bomb and Arson investigators were called to examine the device, which they found to be empty and harmless.

Investigators said there was no way to determine how the device ended up on the field, but added that no break-ins were reported at the ballpark.

Prisoner fees

GA HOMERVILLE — Two former prisoners at the Clinch County Jail want a federal judge to rule that charging inmates \$18 a day for room and board is illegal. A lawsuit contends the southeast Georgia county's sheriff has no authority to charge such fees to people who haven't been convicted. Sheriff Winston Peterson said inmates would be reimbursed if they were later acquitted, but couldn't recall that ever happening.

2 jailed for crime spree

WI MIDDLETON — Two men were jailed after confessing to a three-county crime spree that included killing a cab driver and their female companion, and leaving a man they abducted and robbed tied up in a shed for nearly a week, police said.

The men were arrested after they told security guards at a hotel that they wanted to confess crimes to police, police said. A 37-year-old man was jailed in Baraboo and a 24-year-old man was in Dane County Jail, pending formal charges.

Baraboo police Lt. Rob Sinden said the two men "were closed" and there may be additional arrests. Police also were investigating whether the men were involved in other crimes.

Sex charges recanted

NC RALEIGH — Two women whose testimony in a child molestation case panned behind bars for 20 years have recanted, with one saying her grandmother pressured them to finger the wrong man to protect a cousin. The accusers, cousins who were 4 and 6 when they made the charges, were expected to testify that they falsely accused Sylvester Smith, 53. He was given two consecutive life sentences in 1984.

"The system can correct itself when an error is found," said prosecutor Rex Gore, who is requesting a new trial so that he may drop the charges. "We're hoping we can right a wrong."

One victim says the real abuser was a cousin who is now serving a life sentence for murder. Gore said he would not prosecute because the cousin was 9 at the time.

Stories and photos from wire services

Senator: School strafing is 'incomprehensible'

BY WAYNE PARRY

The Associated Press

NEWARK, N.J. — Calling the accidental strafing of a school by a fighter jet "totally incomprehensible," Sen. Frank Lautenberg called on the Air National Guard to halt all training flights over New Jersey until an investigation is complete.

The New Jersey Democrat on Friday demanded a "guarantee that nothing like this can ever happen again."

Nobody was injured when the rounds hit the Little Egg Harbor Intermediate School just after 10 p.m. Wednesday. A custodian was the only employee in the section of the building that was hit; she was not hurt.

National Guard officials are trying to figure out why the pilot opened fire from 7,000 feet with 25 rounds from a wing-mounted M61-A1 Vulcan cannon. The

pilot, who was not identified by the military, was supposed to be aiming at a target on a practice range 3½ miles away.

Operations at the firing range have been halted while the incident is investigated.

At least eight of the 2-inch-long bullets penetrated classrooms, Little Egg Harbor Police Chief Mark Sling said. The rounds also punctured the school's roof, knocked down ceiling tiles and

scratched the pavement.

The school was closed Thursday and Friday because of a teachers convention. Mike Dupuis, president of the township Board of Education, said the damage was minor and the school will reopen Monday.

The jet belongs to the 113th Wing of the District of Columbia National Guard, and is based at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland.

Army Maj. Sheldon Smith, a spokesman for the District of Columbia National Guard, said of Lautenberg's request, "I think we have suspended flying over there until this investigation is complete."

Smith could not say how long that would take.

"They're going to be looking at the gun and anything else they can to determine why the weapon fired, as well as interviewing the

pilot," he said. "We want to make sure that if there is a problem we correct it right away."

Smith said this was the unit's first accident with its F-16s in 14 years of flying them.

The 113th has been in the air over Washington 24 hours a day since the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Some of its pilots have flown missions during the Iraq war, and in the no-fly zones above Iraq before the war, Smith said.

Obesity epidemic hurting airplanes

The Associated Press

ATLANTA — Heavy suitcases aren't the only things weighing down airplanes and requiring them to burn more fuel, pushing up the cost of flights. A new government study reveals that airlines increasingly have to worry more about the weight of their passengers.

America's growing waistlines are hurting the bottom lines of airline companies as the extra pounds on passengers are causing a drag on planes. Heavier fliers have created heavier fuel costs, according to the government study.

Through the 1990s, the average weight of Americans increased by 10 pounds, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The extra weight caused airlines to spend \$275 million to burn 350 million more gallons of fuel in 2000 just to carry the additional weight of Americans, the federal agency estimated in a recent issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

"The obesity epidemic has unexpected consequences beyond direct health effects," said Dr. Deron Burton of the CDC. "Our goal was to highlight one area that had not been looked at before."

The extra fuel burned also had an environmental impact, as an estimated 3.8 million extra tons of carbon dioxide were released into the air, according to the study.

The agency said its calculations are rough estimates, issued to highlight previously undocumented consequences of the ongoing obesity epidemic.

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The mental training table

College basketball players improve court vision, skills by using video game made for fighter pilots

BY WOODY BAIRD
The Associated Press

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Simplicity Njoya, a forward on the University of Memphis' men's basketball team, sat hunched over a laptop, testing an idea first studied on Israeli fighter pilots.

The premise: Skills he picks up playing a complex computer game can make him a better player.

"The theory is, it's going to be the weight room for the brain," said Memphis assistant coach Ed Schilling.

The on-screen action looks nothing like a basketball game, but is designed to work on the visual and decision-making skills a player needs. Basketball programs at Memphis and the University of Kentucky are testing the game to see if it gives players an edge.

Called IntelliGym, the game was created by Israeli company Applied Cognitive Engineering (ACE) Inc. The company's research supervisor, Daniel Go-

pher, first tested the theory with a study on Israeli pilot cadets in the 1980s.

In addition to their regular training, some cadets played a computer game aimed at improving their concentration.

Gopher and colleagues at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology said in a 1994 report that cadets who played the computer game "performed significantly better" than other trainees in subsequent test flights.

The basketball training game is different than the one used by the pilots, but ACE says it is based on the same principles. The company hopes to sell the software and support for \$5,000 to \$10,000 a season to colleges and up to \$85,000 to professional teams.

Video games are being used for everything from preparing soldiers for battle to helping surgeons improve hand-eye coordination, said Marc Prensky, author of the book, "Digital Game-Based Learning."

Daphne Bavelier, a professor

of cognitive sciences at the University of Rochester, said she had not seen the ACE game but knew of Gopher's work with pilots.

The basic theories are still under study but research indicates that some video games can shorten reaction time for processing visual information, said Bavelier. She has done studies finding that young adults who played video games had better visual skills than those who didn't.

In IntelliGym, two sets of abstract figures move constantly across a dark screen. One set is larger and egg-shaped, while the other looks like small video-game spaceships.

A player tries to attach one of the smaller figures to a larger one to steal its "energy." The player also must "shoot" to transfer power from one small figure to another as openings appear.

The game gets progressively more difficult as it's played and is individually adjusted depending on a player's strengths or weak-



University of Memphis forward Almay Thiero, left, uses a computer program called IntelliGym on Oct. 12 in Memphis, Tenn., as assistant coach Ed Schilling looks over his shoulder.

nesses.

The idea is to increase the player's ability to focus on several things at once, recognize patterns among moving objects and make decisions quickly.

The training runs from six to 10 weeks with two 30- to 40-minute sessions each week. Results of each player's training sessions are transmitted to a computer at ACE, then on to coaches.

Njoya said he enjoys it. "You keep moving, so you've got to constantly deal with what's

the best decision," he said. "It's like when you're driving with the ball. Who's in the open? Who's being guarded?"

Memphis coaches expect to judge the game's success by turnover rates, shooting percentages and other statistics. If a player starts picking better shots or getting more assists, it might be due, in part, to the computer game.

"If it decreases one turnover a game, that's the difference between winning or losing many games in a season," Schilling said.

Pabst lives on in old Milwaukee brewery

BY GRETCHEN EHLEKE
The Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — When Pabst Brewing Co. abruptly closed its headquarters here in 1996 and later moved to San Antonio, the owner and its workers hid behind a treasure trove of relics dating back to the brewer's 1844 origin.

A yellowed visitors' registry and vintage photographs uncovered in a basement storage area of the former brewing complex provide a link to the rich heritage of Pabst, once the nation's largest brewer.

A calendar on the wall in one corporate office is still turned to December 1996, when the brewing era came to a halt at the 22-acre complex. Dusty ornaments hang on an artificial balsam Christmas tree in another office area, a reminder of happier times when Pabst managers gathered in Blue Ribbon Hall at the end of the week to swap stories and share the product they had a hand in making.

That December, Pabst stopped making Blue Ribbon and its other beers at the downtown plant for the first time since Prohibition.

Personal belongings were left behind. Company-issued jackets hung in the lockers of production workers, pictures of athletes stuck on locker doors, dirty glasses and ashtrays filled with cigarette butts were left on desks.



A photo of some of the many old relics that were found by the Brew City redevelopment group that has purchased the old Pabst Brewery in Milwaukee, Wis.

The brewing company got its start in Milwaukee after Jacob Best Sr. relocated his German brewery. Two of Best's four sons, Jacob Jr. and Charles, had traveled to Milwaukee in 1842 to establish a vinegar factory. Charles Best returned to Mettenheim, Germany, and brought the rest of the family to Milwaukee early in 1844.

Son Phillip Best became the sole proprietor in 1859 and established the Phillip Best Brewing Co. Five years later he became partners with Capt. Frederick Pabst, who had married Phillip's daughter.

By 1874, the brewery was the nation's largest. It became the Pabst Brewing Co. in 1889 with Charles Pabst at the helm.

A year after Prohibition was repealed in 1933, Pabst's sales broke the 1 million barrel mark.

It tripled sales by 1946 and nearly quadrupled them again by 1968 after buying Blatz Brewing Co.

"Every bar we went to, everything was Pabst," said Beverly Leonardelli, 70, of Milwaukee. Her former husband, who worked for Pabst for 32 years, would bring home a turkey and a case of beer from his employer every Christmas.

Pabst's sales had reached 15.6 million barrels by 1978 before they began to decline. The brewer laid off 70 percent of its Milwaukee work force by early 1996 and later that year announced it would shift the remaining production to Stroh Brewing Co.'s La Crosse plant. Pabst had already contracted with Stroh to handle two-thirds of its production in La Crosse.

Remnants of Pabst's brewing history remained behind at the

Milwaukee headquarters, some evident in the elaborate carvings and stained glass at its offices and visitors' center, others boxed and buried in the basement.

The Pabst complex remained undisturbed until developers purchased the \$10.3 million property in September 2002 and meticulously began picking through the past.

Brew City president Jim Haertel and his sister, Linda Gleason, of Mesa, Ariz., poked around a basement storage area.

"We saw piles of boxes and papers. We were like, 'What is this?' When we started going through we saw [photographs of] Groucho Marx and Danny Kaye. And we were like, 'Oh, my gosh, these are people that have visited here and left their mark on this place,'" Gleason said. "It was such a thrill because it was history coming to life right there."

Former NFL kicker may plea insanity in shooting

The Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — A former National Football League player accused of firing shots into the compound of Siegfried & Roy may seek an insanity defense, his attorney said Friday.

"It's clear his mental state is an issue," public defender Daren Richards said after Cole Murdoch Ford's initial court appearance in the drive-by shooting on Sept. 21.

Ford, 31, was not required to enter a plea to charges of assault with a deadly weapon, discharging a firearm from a motor vehicle and discharging a firearm at a structure. He appeared by closed-circuit video and a judge scheduled another hearing Nov. 22.

Ford, a former kicker for the Oakland Raiders, was arrested Tuesday when a woman recognized him at a copy store near the Las Vegas Strip and summoned police.

He could face up to 27 years in prison if convicted of all charges. He had been sought after being identified as the owner of a white minivan from which shots were fired at the compound owned by entertainers Siegfried Fischbacher and Roy Horn. No one was hurt, but police said shotgun pellets shattered windows and left a hole in a wall.

Witnesses told police the gunman shouted that the entertainers should get out of the country. Police have not said if the two men were home at the time.

Sunday Horoscope

The Virgo moon brings some much-needed grounding, as there are no other earth-sign influences helping out this week. There's beauty in practical things like a nutritious meal or clean house. So spend time getting things in order — this week is going to be big in terms of shaking up with the unexpected doorknob ring or romantic twist.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (November 7). You'll be so grateful for what this year brings — and your gratitude helps multiply your good fortune.

Next month features the games people play, and you love a good game! Plus, you're so adept at learning the rules and strategizing to optimize results. That's why your career takes off in January. A major relationship choice is issued in June. Your lucky numbers are 1, 9, 24, 39 and 52.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Signs of your evolution emerge. Where you were timid, you're now strong, and there's a smile where that snarl used to be. Do something out of character. Who knows, maybe you'll find out that it's now in character.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You've got a panoramic view of the big picture — leave the small details to someone else, right? Wrong! You'll find exquisite joy in handling what would normally be considered tedious. So jump in with that feather duster.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Normally, endless possibilities are delightful — however, today is anything but normal. If you've got more than three choices, you'll choose nothing. So ask for the abbreviated "menu" from loved ones and friends.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). If you've been waiting for a chance, you'll realize now that chances are not to be waited for. They're to be molded, carved out or invented. Move forward as though someone were leaving you a way in.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You know better than to borrow trouble, but sometimes, it's fun to have a little on loan. When there's a risk of becoming bored, you know just who

to call to spice things up and how far to go before you're really in danger.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22).

Sensational news is part of the fun. But even fascinating stories have their downside. You'll get a glimpse at the path you didn't take. Resist the urge to long for what might have been.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23).

Your positive outlook is not only pleasant, but it causes things to move in your life. Just as a sunbeam focused through a magnifying glass can start a fire, when you're focused on good, goodness multiplies and takes over.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21).

If you don't hook up with friends now, you're really missing out! Time-tested pals bring out your humor (you're comfortable enough to tap into your genius wit). Add one new person to the group and — voila! It could be love.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21).

In a creative mood, you'll be further inspired by both the perfection of nature and the vivid pictures in every day life. Do something with this sizzling energy! Tonight, your dreams are prophetic.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19).

People are gravitating toward your strength, and you're asked to do something that makes you feel uneasy.

In the words of spirited rocker Janis Joplin (also a Capricorn), "Don't compromise yourself. You're all you've got."

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18).

You want to make everything around you beautiful, and you can! Affordability is a relative term. There are ways of getting around budget limitations. Stick to what you want, and don't listen to anyone who says you can't have it.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20).

Having to explain things over and over is a sign that maybe you're in the wrong place at the wrong time with the wrong person. Move yourself into different environments until you return to that sense of flow you're used to.

Creators Syndicate

Holiday Mathis



Bisexual woman in tricky situation over fertilization

Dear Abby: I am a 20-year-old bisexual female. I am madly in love with my partner, "Darcy." We have been together for 10 short, wonderful months, but I know without a doubt in my heart that she's "the one" for me. She feels the same.

All I have ever really wanted out of life is to become a mother. I feel that is the reason I was born female, and I wouldn't be able to forgive myself if I died without giving birth. I also don't want to become a mother in any other way except the "old-fashioned way."

Darcy knows how I feel about this and says it's OK with her — she wouldn't care if I was with a man for that purpose only. But whenever we talk about it, I get the feeling that she's only agreeing because she thinks it will hurt me if she doesn't. So my question is, should I go ahead and try to have a baby in the old-fashioned way, or just forget it and not fulfill my one and only true dream because I love her so much and don't want to lose her?

— Torn in Oregon

Dear Torn: This is a question you and your partner should discuss with an obstetrician/gynecologist. Surely you are aware

that you can be impregnated by artificial insemination, using donor sperm or the sperm of a donor you and Darcy know. In that way, you could fulfill your dream without having to worry about arousing any insecurities.

Dear Abby



Dear Abby: I was divorced after only eight years of marriage. I raised my son, "Bart," alone. We have always had a close relationship, except for the normal ups and downs during his teen years.

Bart is now a successful adult in his late 20s, working professionally in a nearby suburb. He usually calls me once or twice a week and drops by for dinner a couple of times a month. I look forward to his visits and our heart-to-heart chats.

Bart has had several girlfriends in the past, but has been dating a lovely new woman for several months. She is a sweet, bright young lady with whom I get along very well.

In recent months, whenever Bart visits, his girlfriend always comes along. She rarely joins in the conversation and seems only to sit there waiting for us to "finish" so they can be on their way. Our talks have become brief and superficial — far different from times past. I wish he would visit by himself some-

times. Am I wrong to want to see my son without her occasionally?

— Maui Mama in Hawaii

Dear Maui Mama: No, and you should tell your son how you feel. It is nice that he has found a girl who is worthy of bringing home to Maui, but that doesn't mean she should come along on every visit.

Dear Abby: My cousin came crying to me. She said her husband had been having an affair. She was devastated — until I told her about an incident at my last job. My boss, "Lila," confided to me that her husband had had an affair.

She said that after she caught him cheating with her sister, she took him back and told him, "Remember this: I've got an affair coming."

From then on, he was so busy making sure she didn't cheat on him that she never had to worry about him cheating on her.

— Laughing in North Dakota

Dear Laughing: Your boss was a clever lady, but I hope she didn't mess serious. One wrong is bad enough. Two wrongs not only don't make a right, but can also destroy a marriage.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box #9440, San Francisco, CA 94109. Write Abby on the internet at <http://www.pittsburgh.com/dearabby>. Universal Press Syndicate

Irresponsible for parent to let children drink alcohol at home

Dear Annie: A co-worker recently informed me that she allows her underage children, one as young as 15, to drink alcohol at home. She seems to think this will keep them from drinking at other places. Her attitude infuriates me.

I realize you cannot stop kids from doing certain things, but you don't have to condone it. We've been made aware of the evils of underage smoking, but no one seems to care about the kids who pass out every weekend from the alcohol-drenched parties they attend. I've never heard of someone smoking a cigarette and ending up in bed with a stranger who gets them pregnant or leaves them with an STD. Drinking causes car accidents, provokes people to abuse others and kills marriages.

How can my co-worker be having like this?

— Incensed Mother

Dear Incensed: Many parents do not realize that it is illegal to serve their underage children alcohol, even in their own home.

Your co-worker runs the risk of being arrested, and if a drunk child becomes injured or has alcohol poisoning, she would be held responsible. She also is being shortsighted and foolish.

When parents permit their children to engage in illegal activities at home, they are giving tacit approval for such behavior. Children assume their parents don't care and that it's no big deal. It certainly won't stop them from drinking elsewhere, but it will under the misconception that they are providing a safe place for their children to crash, in reality, parents are encouraging them to get drunk and take risks. Remember — children, even teenagers, see their parents as role models.

Dear Annie: I met "George" two years ago. Soon after, I received a tax refund of \$4,000 and told him he could have half for a down payment on a new truck.

George took only \$500 for the down payment and arranged a monthly payment of \$350. Then he asked me for the remaining

\$1,500. I was a little upset, but to save an argument, I deposited \$1,500 into his bank account.

We were married in October of that year, and I learned I would be inheriting \$80,000. I immediately told George he could use some of that money to pay off the balance on his truck (which is in his name only). Now I've decided I want to use that money to buy a house, but George insists I give him the money for the truck first.

Would I be selfish if I didn't worry that George will walk out the door as soon as I pay off his truck and I'll be left with \$15,000.

— Scared in California

Dear Calif: What a lovely, trusting marriage you have. You made a promise to your husband, and it seems a little chintzy of you to go back on your word. We say, pay off the truck, because you promised and because you love him, and use the rest for whatever you wish. If George leaves, your marriage wasn't worth much to begin with.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Spurge, longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please e-mail your questions to annie@anniesmailbox.com. Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045. Creators Syndicate

Flying off the (ax) handle

Can you explain the origin of the phrase "fly off the handle," meaning "go into a state of sudden and violent anger"? What "handle" are people talking about?

The handle in the phrase "off the handle" is the handle of an ax.

In the pioneer days, axes were handmade, and the ax-heads were often crudely fitted to the handle.

Thus it was not uncommon to hear of, or even see, the head of

an ax flying off as the woodsman chopped away.

This sudden flying off of the head of an ax and the danger that it caused eventually came to suggest the danger or trouble that comes when people suddenly lose their tempers.

The first documented use of the phrase "off the handle" is from 1825.

This column was prepared by the editor of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. Readers may send questions to Merriam-Webster's Wordwatch, P.O. Box 281, 47 Federal St., Springfield, Mass. 01102.

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CENRAL OFFICE: 529 14th Street NW, Suite 350, Washington DC 20045-1201, Phone 312-733-6435 or fax (+1) (202) 733-6435
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: David Mazzella, 529 14th St. NW, Suite 350, Washington, DC 20045-1201, Phone 312-733-6435 or fax (+1) (202) 733-6435
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Drivers say: bring on missions

I am writing in reference to the articles and letters on the 343rd Quartermaster Company — "Army investigating why 19 failed to report for fueling convoy in Iraq" (Oct. 17). I hope they had a legitimate reason for refusing a mission. I also hope this does not shine a bad light on transportation companies as a whole, because we are not all the same.

I am a member of a transportation company that has been overseas for nine months. In that time we have logged more than 2.7 million miles. We are working under our third group and our third battalion, so we have had to adapt to a lot of changes.

Currently, most of the soldiers in my company would rather be on the road than in camp, because it is less stressful to be driving through Baghdad than dealing with everything back at camp. Every time we return to camp there are new rules and more details to do. For example, we have to clean the trash out of the concertina wire twice a day because it is not taken into consideration that when the wind blows the trash that is everywhere in this country blows into the wire.

We are also tired of being treated like second-class soldiers because we are National Guard members. Many active-duty soldiers, some of whom have been in country for less than a month, treat us like we cannot do our job right. We constantly have to turn our heads and ignore them to keep our job numbers speak for themselves.

We do our job and we do it well. So keep the missions coming because my company is ready and willing to take them.

Sp. Amy Mullen

Camp Navistar, Iraq

Soldiers deserve good gear

There have been a lot of comments about the 343rd Quartermaster Company. One letter writer suggested that, despite all their mission shortcomings, unit members should just "back it up and drive on." That is a load of crap.

None of us joined the Army to be a sacrificial lamb. I'm here to do my job and wouldn't mind staying alive, thank you very much. I am fully capable equip-

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorial and columns that are published in the newspaper, and values letters on topics of importance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or base and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

Send your letters to:

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64345 Griesheim

Via fax: (+39) code +49 (0) 6155/601395;
DSN 349-8395

E-mail: letters@mail.strips.es.com

ment and the necessary firepower to do so when we got out on missions. We are not in Iraq to give our lives away. We are here to stop the terrorist threat from growing. If we happen to lose our life while fighting the fight, then so be it, but we wouldn't be sent out poorly prepared.

Soldiers are trained to stop the enemy and win wars. We have been promised by our chain of command up to the commander in chief to be fully mission-capable to win, and we expect that.

Back in the hood there is old phrase, "The streets is watching." Loosely translated: The opponent is seeing our every move and is keeping track of our weaknesses. The insurgents in Iraq are using ever-adapting and effective ways of killing us. We cannot continue to send soldiers on high-risk missions, driving around through "hot zones" without armored vehicles, or without an escort that has superior gunfire. That is not what I call properly prepared or well equipped to win this war.

I pose this challenge to all levels of command leadership, for you are the ones that can make changes happen. You expect the best from your soldiers, we soldiers expect the best from you.

Sp. Will Johnson
Forward Operating Base
Summerville, Iraq

Watch liberal slant

As much as I like reading Stars and Stripes to stay up to date on current events, I'm considering a boycott. For some time I've thought the articles had a liberal slant, but the story "Report: 100,000 Iraqi civilians killed in war" (Midwest edition, Oct. 30) is the worst example of fair-and-balanced reporting I've seen. Most soldiers only see the headline and do not have the time to read the fourth paragraph stating, "The scientists who wrote the report concede that the data they based their projections were of 'limited precision.'"

I believe it is the editors' job to sift through erroneous material put before them. Perhaps you are aspiring to stand Dan Rather in his goal to work against the bias in America. The entire article is full of discrediting information. Nowhere does it mention how the investigators "polling the houses" concluded that the increase in deaths was due to American attacks. I've seen more vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices and IEDs kill civilians that anything U.S. soldiers have been doing.

Maybe the information is right, but I believe it is your responsibility to edit out articles that cannot present good evidence. Maybe you need to fight a war under the Associated Press reporter who wrote the story so she does better research. Give troops the credible facts. They are smart enough to form their own opinions.

Josh Muehlendorf

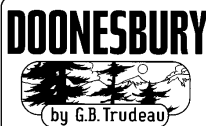
Camp Taji, Iraq

No bell-bottom blues

Regarding the proposed new Navy uniforms discussed in the article "Navy to test out 'working uniforms'" (Oct. 21): This idea stinks. Sailors have always rejected a change in their uniform because they felt they were unique. This change is just another way to further homogenize individuals, so that servicemen are interchangeable as indistinguishable numbers. I suspect this idea came from a clerical or accountant-type mind, perhaps with the idea of keeping up with fashion rather than honored tradition. No more bell-bottom trousers? Give us a break!

Bill Shannon

Los Angeles



OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other statewide syndicates.

Social issues swelled turnout The Patriot Ledger, Quincy, Mass.

[Sen. John Kerry] could see that even with more than 100,000 absentee and provisional ballots to be counted in Ohio, the odds were against reversing a Bush victory. In late morning on Wednesday, Kerry called the White House to concede the election.

By any measure, Tuesday was a very bad day for Democrats.

Along with Bush's 3 million-vote margin in the popular vote, Republicans gained seats in both houses of Congress. They had a huge psychological and strategic win in South Dakota, knocking off the Senate Democratic leader, Tom Daschle....

Social issues were highly significant for the president's victory....

Ohio was telling. In a state that lost a quarter-million jobs on Bush's watch, social issues would appear to have tipped the balance in the president's favor. Ohio was one of 11 states with a ballot question on what constitutes a marriage, a subject sure to draw social conservatives to the polls to vote for Bush....

While the voting details are dissected state by state, it may be that the gay marriage issue was the key variable in a tight election.

More voters healthy for nation Houston Chronicle

Regardless of who won the presidency for the next four years, this election produced the larger winner, the republic. The massive increase in voter turnout demonstrated a vigorous, functional democracy at work....

The country gains when many more of its citizens believe that they vote matters. The nation is invigorated when most of the citizens eligible to vote are willing to brave weather and long lines to take part in the process that keeps government of, by and for the people.

A large turnout has a beneficial effect on future elections.

Politicians realize they cannot win by appealing solely to a narrow ideological base. A healthy turnout by minority Americans, whose turnout often is disproportionately low, informs both major parties that minority concerns cannot be discounted or ignored.

Journalists keep press safe Miami Herald

Palm Beach Supervisor of Elections Theresa LePore and state sheriff's deputies abused their authority with the arrest of freelance journalist James S. Henry for trying to photograph voters waiting in line on Sunday. In the process, they violated the First Amendment and true intent of statutes to ensure orderly voting....

Ms. LePore's order restricting journalists to a tent 100 feet away violates the spirit and letter of the law as well as the media's right to monitor elections as the public's surrogate.

A Circuit Court ruling on Election Day that this "cone of privacy" should extend to the last voter in the line should be applauded. The point of the law is to protect voters from intimidation.

Journalists who are doing their job and protecting the free-speech rights of those voters shouldn't be denied access....

Voters should be able to vote without interference. However, government's respon-



sibility to keep order at the polls doesn't trump export language in the law, the First Amendment or the right of the media to monitor elections. Given all the concerns about these elections and problems of the 2000 vote, monitoring is more important than ever to our democracy.

Electoral College not imitated Star Tribune, Minneapolis

We cannot shake the notion that the candidate who gets the most votes should be president....

The supreme irony of the Electoral College is that the jalopy cannot be fixed. Reversing its precepts — exaggerated power for small states and winner-take-all voting — would require too many in Congress and state legislatures to vote against their own interests....

Because of extra weight to small states and because a candidate could narrowly lose a state and get no credit for the votes he won, it's entirely possible for a candidate to win the national popular vote, even by a wide margin, and still lose the election if his opponent wins narrowly in the right combination of states....

The nation deserves a fairer, more direct method of selecting a president. Many democracies around the world have copied the American system; none has copied the Electoral College....

Many principled arguments are made for keeping the Electoral College, including a fear that narrow factions would replace parties. But no argument, in our judgment, can overcome the contraption's basic unfairness. The faction problem could be handled through instant runoff voting, for example, where voters would list their first and second preferences for president....

Why not go for direct national election of the president?

Illness puts court on agenda The Lima (Ohio) News

The hospitalization of U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist for thyroid cancer suddenly spotlighted one issue that received too little attention in the presidential campaign....

President Bush could put at least two, but perhaps as many as four, justices on

the high court, changing the course of U.S. lawmaking and public policy for decades to come.

And that likely will have a far greater impact on the nation than virtually anything else he is likely to do in his second term. It's clear Bush could tip the balance on the court decisively.

We heard too little from both candidates on what they would be looking for in prospective justices.

We're not so cynical that we see Rehnquist's misfortune as some sort of campaign trick. We're just glad the Supreme Court's future has finally been elevated to the place it deserves as a campaign issue, even if belatedly.

Flu-vaccine woes need a look The Walla Walla (Wash.) Union-Bulletin

There isn't much money to be made ... in preventing flu.

And that's a significant reason the flu vaccine is in short supply this year. Pharmaceutical companies simply aren't interested in making the vaccine....

Flu vaccine can't be saved from year to year because the flu virus constantly mutates. A year-old vaccine is ineffective....

In addition, drug companies worry about the legal liability of the flu vaccine....

This year just two companies made flu vaccine for the U.S. market. But one of the companies, Chiron Corp., couldn't deliver 48 million doses because of a contamination problem in Britain....

U.S. government health officials have established guidelines so the most vulnerable to complications from the flu have access to the vaccine.... But what about next year and the year after?... The issues of vaccine supply and liability can and should be worked on in a bipartisan manner regardless of who controls Congress and the White House.

After all, protecting the health and safety of the people is one of the primary responsibilities of government.

Health plans benefit taxpayers Las Vegas Sun

A number of states, including Nevada, increasingly are showing that they're con-

cerned about the high percentage of workers who lack health insurance. Legislation that would have required large grocery stores, including those run by Wal-Mart, to provide basic health insurance passed in the state Assembly last year but died in the Senate.... One of the companies fighting this ballot question is Wal-Mart, whose meager health benefits are helping fuel the initiative....

Only 45 percent of (Wal-Mart's) work force can afford the company's health insurance plan. Costco, in contrast, not only pays better wages but it also requires its employees to pay just 8 percent of its health insurance plan, so that, not so coincidentally, 96 percent of its employees enroll in its health plan....

If businesses don't pay for their employees' health insurance, government-run hospitals that provide care for the indigent and for those without health insurance have to absorb the costs. Ultimately, taxpayers must pick up the tab, which means that we end up subsidizing the greed of Wal-Mart and other like-minded companies — and they end up laughing all the way to the bank.

Red Sox 8, Curse 0 The Post and Courier, Charleston, S.C.

On Oct. 17, the Boston Red Sox were routed in their home park (Fenway) by the dreaded New York Yankees — a humiliating, 19-8 defeat that pushed the visitors' edge to three games to none in the American League Championship Series. Ten nights and eight consecutive victories later, the Red Sox captured their first World Series title since 1918, finally and emphatically removing the "Curse of the Bambino"....

Boston didn't need a seventh World Series game, or even a fifth, this time. After taking four in a row over the Yankees to become the first team in big-league history to win a best-of-seven series after losing the first three games, the Red Sox made short work of the National League champion St. Louis Cardinals, capping the four-game World Series sweep with a 3-0 road victory on Oct. 27.

Eventually, the Red Sox will lose another game. But not this one. And when they do, nobody will be able to blame it on the Curse of the Bambino.

YOUR MONEY



A vendor in Bucharest, Romania, sells newspapers that feature coverage of the U.S. presidential election on Thursday. In the States, however, newspaper sales are struggling. A recent analysis by the Newspaper Association of America showed an overall decline in circulation among the nation's 20 biggest dailies.

U.S. newspaper sales down

BY SETH SUTEL
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Circulation declined at most major newspapers across the country in the last half year, the latest blow for an industry already rocked by a scandal involving circulation misstatements that has undermined the confidence of investors and advertisers.

The figures of four newspapers — Newsday of New York's Long Island, Dallas Morning News, the Chicago Sun-Times and Hoy, a Spanish-language newspaper in New York — were not included in the report released Monday as part of a penalty levied by the Audit Bureau of Circulations, a publishing industry reporting group.

Overall, daily circulation at the newspapers reporting for the six-month period ending Sept. 30 declined 0.9 percent, according to an analysis of the Audit Bureau's data by the Newspaper Association of America, an industry group. Sunday circulation declined by 1.5 percent. The group also said that only one-third of newspapers in the survey reported circulation gains.

The Audit Bureau report showed a 5.6 percent fall at the Los Angeles Times and a 2 percent drop at the Chicago Tribune. Those declines were reported last week when the parent company of both papers, Tribune Co., reported its third-quarter earnings. Tribune also owns two of the papers that were censured by the Audit Bureau for making circulation misstatements, Newsday and Hoy.

Tribune, which has put in place more stringent controls on its circulation reporting, said it had not discovered any other circulation problems beyond those already reported at Newsday and Hoy. Gannett Co.'s USA Today remained the largest-selling paper in the country with daily circulation of 2.3 million, up 2.8 percent from the comparable six-month period a year ago. The Wall Street Journal, published by financial news publisher Dow Jones & Co., remained No. 2 with 2.1 million, up 0.8 percent.

John Sturm, president of the NAA, said of the figures, "We're not wild about it because it shows a bit of a decrease again," but he added that the declines were in line with recent trends. He also said publishers were finding ways to keep attracting new readers despite new rules governing telemarketing such as the do-not-call lists.

"Newspapers have been very dependent on telemarketing in the past, and that's a hill to climb," said John Murray, vice president of circulation marketing at the NAA. "Newspapers are making progress, but it's uneven."

Murray said newspapers were making up for the shortfall with other methods of getting readers, including direct mail and in-person marketing techniques in public places like shopping centers.

However, the impact of the telemarketing rules

Data on biggest papers

The Associated Press

Average daily circulation of the nation's 20 biggest newspapers for the six months ended Sept. 30, as reported Monday by the Audit Bureau of Circulations. The percentage changes are from the comparable year-ago period.

1. USA Today, 2,309,853, up 2.8 percent
2. The Wall Street Journal, 2,106,774, up 0.8 percent
3. The New York Times, 1,121,057, up 0.2 percent
4. Los Angeles Times, 902,164, down 5.6 percent
5. New York Daily News, 715,052, down 1.6 percent
6. The Washington Post, 707,690, down 3 percent
7. New York Post, 686,207, up 5.2 percent
8. Chicago Tribune, 600,988, down 2 percent
9. Houston Chronicle, 554,783, up 0.3 percent
10. San Francisco Chronicle, 468,720, down 8.5 percent
11. The Boston Globe, 451,471, up 0.2 percent
12. The Arizona Republic, 413,268, down 4.4 percent
13. The Star-Ledger of Newark, N.J., 400,042, down 2.1 percent
14. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 397,097, up 3.8 percent
15. Star Tribune of Minneapolis-St. Paul, 381,094, up 0.2 percent
16. The Philadelphia Inquirer, 368,883, up 0.1 percent
17. The Plain Dealer, Cleveland, 354,309, down 3 percent
18. Detroit Free Press, 348,838, down 1.1 percent
19. The San Diego Union-Tribune, 339,032, down 3.7 percent
20. The Oregonian, Portland, 337,707, up 0.9 percent

Four newspapers were not allowed to include their circulation figures in the report released Monday as a penalty for misstating circulation figures in the past: Newsday of New York's Long Island; the Dallas Morning News; the Chicago Sun-Times and Hoy, a Spanish-language newspaper in New York. The first three papers were among the top 20 papers last year.

on newspapers has been significant. As of the beginning of last year, newspapers relied on telemarketing for nearly 40 percent of all new subscriptions, and those sales have declined from 15 percent to 25 percent, according to a recent survey, Murray said.

Doug Arthur, a newspaper analyst for the Morgan Stanley investment bank, said the integrity of newspaper circulation figures remains a major concern for investors in the stocks of those companies.

"It's a big issue," Arthur said. "I suspect that the numbers here will reflect a more conservative filtering as they tighten up and get 100 percent comfortable with the numbers they're presenting to the public."

The Audit Bureau report covers 841 daily and 662 Sunday newspapers.

Shifting health care at home

Susie Besaw, from the book "The Savvy Sailor's Spouse," is new to the military lifestyle but is eager to learn more about how to manage her family and her new life through the monthly Family Readiness Group meetings of her husband, Jake's, new command. Last week, Cmdr. Michel talked about Tricare.

On Friday morning, I stopped by Maggie's to see if she needed anything from the commissary.

I looked in the front door and saw Maggie was just cleaning up from breakfast. Little Jimmy was at the table coloring.

"Knock knock, neighbor," I said through the front screen.

"Come on in, Susie," Maggie said.

"I was just wondering if you needed anything at the commissary," I asked. "I'm heading out for my Friday food run."

Maggie stopped doing the dishes and opened up the fridge and her cupboard. She made a scrunched face as if to say she hadn't gotten that far in her day.

"It's leftover Friday night again," she replied. "I'll go sometime this weekend. Thanks anyway."

"Did you try that double chocolate cake Evelyn made last night?" I asked. "It was amazing."

"No," Maggie replied. "I stepped on the scale yesterday and thought somebody had messed with it. When that excuse didn't work, I surrendered that I packed on a few pounds."

I realized that my skirts and suits were snugger, too, since I had arrived in San Diego. I missed exercising — mainly because I didn't know where to go. Back on Whidbey Island, I knew where all the best gyms and aerobics classes were located. In San Diego, I didn't have a clue.

Based on my skirts, I figured five pounds must have snuck up on me since I arrived.

"I know how you feel," I said. "Anything I can do to help?"

Maggie perked up. I could almost hear the wheels turn-

ing in her head.

"Hey," she said, with a devilous smile. "You want to work out together?"

What fun, I thought. "Sure," I replied. "But where?"

"I bet you didn't know about the weight room and aerobics classes at the base gym," she replied.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yeah," she replied. "I used to go to the night classes a couple nights a week after Jim came home. I haven't been back since I busted my ankle. There is a really fun aerobics instructor. His name is Michael, but we call him Sven."

This workout idea was starting to sound even better.

"I'm game," I said. "When do we start?"

"The only hiccup is Jimmy," she said. "We'll have to go at night in order for Jim to watch him."

"Or Jake," I quipped. "I'm sure he wouldn't mind."

"Before I got hurt," she said, "I was going to aerobics on Monday and Thursday from 7 to 8 p.m., and weight training on Wednesday from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m."

"I finish work at 5," I replied.

"We could drive together to work out after dinner."

"It's a deal then," Maggie said. "I'll call and sign us both up. Thanks, neighbor."

The following Monday I dusted off my exercise clothes and put them on just before Maggie came to pick me up. My work out clothes were snug, too, unfortunately.

"Don't break anything," Jake kidded as I left.

I gave Jake a look before I left and said, "You're skating on thin ice, mister."

Next week, Susie and Maggie meet Sven.

Copies of Ralph Nelson's books — "The Savvy Sailor" and "The Savvy Naval Officer" — can be purchased by writing to Master Plan Inc., 500 N. Washington St., P.O. Box 10071, Rockville, MD 20849 or online at www.savvyonweb.com. This article is written and the book is sold with the understanding that neither the author nor Stars and Stripes are professional financial advisers. If you need advice, please seek professional assistance. The author specifically disclaims any liability, loss or risk — personal or otherwise — incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of using or applying any of the information contained in this article or the book. E-mail for finance@stripes.osd.mil

Money U.



Ralph Nelson



SCOREBOARD

AFN TV & Radio

Sunday

AFN-Sports, 6 a.m. — Golf: PGA racing NASCAR Busch Series, Bristol, Tenn. (PGA Motorsports 200 (disc)).

AFN-Sports, 9 a.m. — Golf: PGA Tour Championship, third round (disc).
AFN-Pacific, 1 p.m. — College football: Oregon at California (disc).
AFN-Pacific, 3 p.m. — College football: Maryland at Virginia (disc).
AFN-Atlanta, 7 p.m. — NFL: N.Y. Jets at Buffalo.

AFN-Atlanta, 7:30 p.m. — NFL: Philadelphia at Pittsburgh at Denver (in progress).
AFN-Atlanta, 11 p.m. — Pro football: Kansas City at Tampa Bay.
AFN-Pacific, 8:30 p.m. — Pro football: Cleveland at Baltimore.
AFN-Pacific, 9:30 p.m. — NFL: New England at San Diego.

Monday

AFN-Sports, 12:30 a.m. — Pro football: Houston at Denver (in progress).
AFN-Atlanta, 11 a.m. — Pro football: Kansas City at Tampa Bay.
AFN-Pacific, 2:30 a.m. — Pro football: Cleveland at Baltimore.
AFN-Pacific, 3:30 a.m. — Pro football: Cleveland at Baltimore.

AFN-Sports, 9:30 a.m. — Golf: The Tour Championship, final round (disc).
AFN-Pacific, 4 p.m. — Tennis: Paribas Masters, highlights.
AFN-Sports, 6:30 p.m. — College football: Mississippi St. at Alabama (disc).

All times Central European Time; disc indicates coverage on satellite radio. For more information, visit www.mylifeline.net.

Pro football

NFL

AMERICAN CONFERENCE
East
 New England 6 1 0 571 128 134
 N.Y. Jets 6 1 0 857 168 116
 Dolphins 3 0 0 286 115 120
 Miami 1 7 0 125 102 136

South
 Jacksonville 4 0 0 525 128 146
 Houston 4 0 0 571 158 143
 Tennessee 3 0 0 375 151 138
 Tennessee 3 0 0 375 151 138

North
 Pittsburgh 6 1 0 857 170 134
 Baltimore 4 0 0 571 127 100
 Cincinnati 2 0 0 286 126 101

West
 Denver 5 3 0 286 168 146
 New Orleans 4 0 0 429 154 134
 Kansas City 3 4 0 429 107 137
 Oakland 2 0 0 250 128 123

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

East
 Philadelphia 7 1 0 1,000 186 104
 N.Y. Giants 2 0 0 714 151 113
 Washington 2 0 0 429 138 117
 Washington 2 0 0 286 98 123

South
 Atlanta 6 2 0 750 170 134
 New Orleans 2 0 0 286 109 124
 Tampa Bay 4 0 0 143 150 108

North
 Minnesota 5 2 0 714 183 162
 Seattle 4 0 0 429 137 154
 Green Bay 4 0 0 500 206 189
 Chicago 3 0 0 286 108 121

West
 St. Louis 5 2 0 571 158 165
 San Francisco 4 0 0 286 112 118
 San Francisco 4 0 0 286 112 118

Sunday's games

Washington at Detroit
 Arizona at Miami
 N.Y. Jets at Carolina
 Dallas at Cincinnati
 Atlanta at Carolina
 Seattle at San Francisco
 Kansas City at Tampa Bay
 Chicago at N.Y. Giants
 San Francisco at New Orleans
 New Orleans at San Diego
 Denver at Baltimore
 New England at St. Louis
 St. Louis at Baltimore
 Green Bay, Atlanta, Jacksonville, Tennessee

Monday's game

Minnesota at Indianapolis
Sunday, Nov. 14
 Chicago at Tennessee
 Seattle at Atlanta
 Baltimore at N.Y. Jets
 Seattle at St. Louis
 Tampa Bay at Atlanta
 Detroit at Jacksonville
 Jacksonville at Washington
 Pittsburgh at Cleveland
 N.Y. Giants at Arizona
 Minnesota at Green Bay
 San Francisco at San Francisco
 Buffalo at New England
 Oakland, Miami, Denver, Oakland, San Diego

Monday, Nov. 15

Philadelphia at Dallas

Auto racing

Checker Auto Parts 500 lineups

After Friday's qualifying: Sunday at Phoenix International Raceway

Phonix
Length 1 mile
 (1) Ryan Newman, Dodge, 135.854 mph.
 (2) Kevin Harvick, Chevrolet, 135.837.
 (3) Tony Stewart, Chevrolet, 135.832.
 (4) Casey Mears, Chevrolet, 135.834.
 (5) Jeff Gordon, Chevrolet, 135.816.
 (6) Elliott Stryker, Chevrolet, 135.804.
 (7) Jamie McMurray, Dodge, 135.807.
 (8) Jeff Green, Dodge, 135.828.
 (9) Jimmie Johnson, Chevrolet, 135.828.
 (10) Jeff Green, Dodge, 135.800.
 (11) Jimmie Johnson, Chevrolet, 135.828.
 (12) Dale Earnhardt Jr., Chevrolet, 135.836.
 (13) Rusty Wallace, Dodge, 135.714.
 (14) Matt Kenseth, Ford, 135.548.
 (15) Bobby Gordon, Chevrolet, 135.523.
 (16) Ken Schrader, Dodge, 135.488.
 (17) (15) Michael Waltrip, Chevrolet, 135.423.
 (18) Jeff Burton, Chevrolet, 135.261.
 (19) (14) John Andretti, Ford, 135.273.
 (20) (16) Martin, Ford, 135.205.
 (21) Greg Biffle, Ford, 135.057.
 (22) (17) (18) Matt Kenseth, Ford, 135.965.
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Newman claims 4th straight pole in record style

BY MIKE HARRIS
The Associated Press

AVONDALE, Ariz. — If Ryan Newman could find a way to shift his qualifying magic to the races he would be a solid contender for the Nextel Cup championship.

Newman, one of 10 drivers who qualified for the new 10-race championship run on NASCAR's top circuit, easily won his series-leading ninth pole of the season and fourth in a row in qualifying Friday.

This one, the 27th pole in 114 races for the racer known as Rocketman, was a record effort. His lap of 135.499 mph in a Dodge on the one-mile Phoenix International Raceway oval, easily topped the mark of 134.178 set in 2000 by teammate Rusty Wallace.

It was Newman's third straight pole here. Unfortunately, for the third-year Cup star, none of the poles this season has resulted in victory. Newman's only win came in June at Michigan, where he started fourth.

His past three poles, which gave him a chance to rebound from some early adversity in the championship chase, have resulted in finishes of 14th, third and 17th. That has left the Penske Racing South driver seventh in the standings heading into Sunday's Checker Auto Parts 500.

Newman hasn't given up despite trailing series leader Kurt Busch by 186 points with only three races remaining.

"We're definitely in the chase mathematically," Newman said. "Is it a long shot? Sure."

Newman is aware of his failure to take advantage of superior starting positions.



Ryan Newman drove his Dodge No. 12 to a lap of 135.499 mph Friday on the one-mile Phoenix International Raceway oval, shattering the mark of 134.178 set in 2000 by Rusty Wallace.

"You win some and you lose some, whether it's on Friday or Sunday," he said. "It's not necessarily disappointing, we just wish we could have capitalized on having the fastest race car."

There was no doubt who was fastest Friday, when rookie Brian Vickers took the second spot at just 133.879 mph.

"I don't know where they got that speed or traction," Vickers said of Newman's team. "We felt we could have run better but we couldn't have run that fast."

"The last few weeks, that team has found something that nobody else has. Whatever it is, though, it doesn't work in the race. It doesn't last."

Busch qualified an undistinguished 28th, but time trials have not been his forte. He has started no better than seventh in seven races since the title chase began, but has only one finish worse than sixth.

That came last Sunday at Atlanta, where Busch's engine blew early in the race, relegating him to 42nd place and allowing several contenders to close in.

Heading into Sunday's race, Busch leads runner-up Jimmie Johnson — on a three-race winning streak — by 59 points. Four-time series champion Jeff Gordon, Mark Martin and Dale Earnhardt Jr. are within 98 points of the lead.

"It's racing," Busch said of his bad day at Atlanta. "We still believe we've got the upper hand. Those other guys have to catch us."

See starting lineup on Page 25.

Hendrick airplane did not ascend after failed landing

BY KRISTEN GELINEAU
The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — The Hendrick Motorsports plane that crashed last month and killed all 10 aboard missed the approach to the airport and then failed to immediately climb before crashing into a mountain, according to a preliminary report Friday.

The National Transportation Safety Board said the proper procedure after a missed approach at Blue Ridge Regional Airport in Spencer called for the aircraft to maneuver right and climb to 2,600 feet.

Instead, the report said, the Beech 200 King Air descended to 1,800 feet before crashing into the southeast slope of Bull Mountain at an altitude of 2,450 feet.

The plane crashed Oct. 24 en route from Concord, N.C., to Martinsville Speedway. The son, brother and two nieces of owner Rick Hendrick, patriarch of one of NASCAR's top syndicates, was killed. A pilot for NASCAR star Tony Stewart also was among the dead as was the team's general manager and chief engine builder.

Both pilots were experienced, the report said. It does not draw a conclusion on the cause of the crash but does note the plane's global positioning system was not certified for instrument-only

flight and the plane did not have a ground proximity warning system. Witnesses reported the mountain was obscured by clouds and fog.

Pilots of at least 20 other planes, most carrying sponsors and race fans, decided it was too dangerous to land at Blue Ridge Airport at the time and touched down at Danville Regional Airport, where landing in bad weather is easier.

After the plane descended to 1,800 feet, the controller advised the crew to climb to 4,400 feet, the report said. There were no further radio transmissions from the crew.

The plane hit some trees before crashing to the ground. The cockpit was destroyed by the impact, and the cockpit and cabin areas were consumed by post-crash fire, the report said.

One witness about 3 to 4 miles southeast of the mountain reported seeing a plane fly past about 60 to 70 feet above the ground, according to the report.

"When you miss something in bad weather ... the safe thing to do is to get to an altitude where you're not going to run into anything," former NTSB board member John Goglia said.

Hendrick Motorsports employs 460 workers at its North Carolina compound, which includes race shops and a museum and team store.

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Proposal threatens plan to move Expos to D.C.

Washington city council chair wants to change location of proposed ballpark

By DERRILL HOLLY

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The chair of the District of Columbia Council proposed Friday that a new ballpark be built next to RFK Stadium instead of a site south of the U.S. Capitol, a plan that could cause Major League Baseball to drop the scheduled move to the Montreal Expos to Washington.

Council Chair Linda Cropp made the proposal to cut costs for the new ballpark, which she estimates would be \$600 million on

the original site, far above the estimate in the \$435 million deal Mayor Anthony A. Williams signed in September.

"The costs are going up so high that I believe it will have a negative effect on our business community," Cropp said. "By moving to RFK Stadium, we have an automatic 20 percent reduction in cost."

Washington's contract with the Expos calls for funding for a ballpark at the original site to be approved by Dec. 31. Cropp said there would be an \$83 million sav-

ings in land acquisition under her plan.

"This is going to blow the thing up," said a livid Williams, warning it could undo 30 years worth of efforts to get the city a team to replace the expansion Washington Senators, who became the Texas Rangers after the 1971 season.

Cropp said she is willing to risk losing the Expos if baseball owners refuse to accept the RFK location.

"I would hope that baseball would be extremely reasonable," Cropp said.

Washington's contract with the Expos does not allow for a change in the stadium site without the team's approval.

"We have an agreement with the mayor whereby he has until the 31st of December to obtain passage of the legislation effectuating the stadium agreement," said John McHale Jr., an executive vice president in the commissioner's office who has been involved in planning the move. "Until that time comes, we're not going to get excited."

In another development, base-

ball spokesman Rich Levin said reports in Friday's editions of The Washington Times and USA Today that the Expos would be renamed the Nationals were premature. Levin said other names, such as the Senators, remain under consideration and that baseball still was conducting focus groups.

Cropp's ballpark plan is supported by Council members Carol Schwartz, David Catania and Phil Mendelson. There are 13 members of the Council, and seven must approve a financing plan.

Ortiz rocks Japan with huge blast

By ROB SMAAL

The Associated Press

TOKYO — Even David Ortiz was amazed by this home run — a 514-foot shot that hit the lights down the right-field line.

"I knew when I hit it that I got all of it," the Boston Red Sox slugger said after the major league All-Stars beat the Japanese stars 5-3 Saturday night in Game 2 of their series. "I thought for a second that it might land in the Dominican [Republic]."

Manager Bruce Bochy of the San Diego Padres said it was the longest home run he has ever seen in all his years in baseball.

Ortiz, who helped power the Red Sox to a World Series title last month, led his touring team to a 7-2 victory in Friday's opener. A day later, he drew gasps from the Tokyo Dome crowd of 52,000 with his solo homer in the bottom of the fourth off starter Shunsuke Watanabe.

"It felt like he hit that ball almost twice the length of the stadium," said Chiba Lotte Marines



Boston Red Sox slugger David Ortiz watches the flight of his solo home run in Game 2 in the MLB-Japan All-Star series in Tokyo on Saturday.

submariner Watanabe, who gave up six hits and three runs in five innings of work. "You can't make any mistakes against these guys."

Cleveland Indians catcher Victor Martinez singled home pinch-runner Marcus Giles of the Atlanta Braves to break a 3-3 tie in the eighth inning. Brad Wilkerson of the Expos followed with a run-scoring double.

Tampa Bay outfielder Carl Crawford, the MVP of Game 2, went 3-for-4, including a leadoff

homer in the first inning. Crawford also made a spectacular diving catch in the fourth and stole a base in the fifth.

Braves right-hander Chris Reitsma got the win with one inning in relief. Francisco Rodriguez of the Anaheim Angels retired the side in order in the ninth for the save.

The teams meet again Sunday in Tokyo before playing in Fukuoka, Osaka, Sapporo and Nagoya. The eight-game series ends in Tokyo on Nov. 14.

Cubs sign SS Perez, talk to Garciaparra

By RONALD BLUM

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Chicago Cubs convinced a shortstop to re-sign Friday.

Nepi Perez agreed to a \$1 million, one-year contract rather than become a free agent. While Cubs General Manager Jim Hendry already started talks with Garciaparra's agent, the five-time All-Star wants to explore the free-agent market.



Perez

for the first time in his career. Perez, a Gold Glove shortstop with Colorado in 2000, hit .371 with two homers and six RBIs in 23 games with the Cubs last season.

"He's a great fit in a lot of ways for us," Hendry said. "He can play an extended period of time for us. We could play him at second or short. He's ideal for a swing role, and he's a great defender off the bench and a runner when he's on base."

Garciaparra was traded to the Cubs on July 31 after spending his entire career — 8½ years — with the Boston Red Sox.

"Our intention was to sign Nepi no matter who is at shortstop," Hendry said. "At worst, you have a real talented guy coming off the bench filling in."

Rather than allow Ugueth Urbina to become a free agent, the Detroit Tigers exercised the closer's \$4 million option. Signed as a free agent on March 29, Urbina was 4-6 with 0.430 ERA and 21 saves in his first season with Detroit. He left the team after his mother was kidnapped Sept. 1 in Venezuela.

Louis exercised a \$2 million option on right-hander Chris Carpenter, who had filed provisionally for free agency earlier in the year. The 29-year-old right hander went a career-best 15-5 with a 3.46 ERA in 28 starts, but missed the postseason because of nerve

Free agent roundup

damage to his right biceps on Sept. 18.

Baltimore declined a \$3 million option of left-hander Buddy Groom, who also had filed provisionally, and must pay him a \$250,000 buyout. Groom was 4-1 with a 4.78 ERA in 60 relief appearances for the Orioles last season.

Jon Lieber's \$8 million option was declined by the New York Yankees and the right-hander, who posted a \$250,000 buyout, was among six players who filed Friday.

Lieber, recovering from elbow ligament replacement surgery in 2003, began spring training as the Yankees' fifth starter and rose to No. 2 by the playoffs. He went 14-8 with a 4.33 ERA in 27 starts during the regular season and was 1-1 with a 3.43 ERA in three starts during the postseason.

Mets left-hander Al Leiter filed provisionally. New York has until Nov. 15 to exercise a \$10 million option or elect to pay a \$2 million buyout. While it appears unlikely the team will exercise the option, the sides may agree to a new deal.

"It's a formality," new Mets general manager Omar Minaya said.

"We spoke to his agent today. We're negotiating, and we're still hopeful to strike a deal to bring Al back next year."

Leiter, who turned 39 last month, went 0-8 with a 3.21 ERA in 30 starts this season.

Pittsburgh right-hander Brian Boehringer also filed provisionally, awaiting a decision by the Pirates on his \$3 million option, which is not likely to be exercised. Boehringer, who would get a \$300,000 buyout, was 1-1 with a 4.62 ERA in 21 relief appearances.

A total of 201 players have filed and six more remain eligible to file before Thursday's deadline, including Houston pitcher Roger Clemens, who still hasn't decided whether to retire. Free agents can start a new deal with money with all teams next Friday.

Berkman may miss start of season

The Associated Press

HOUSTON — Houston Astros outfielder Lance Berkman may miss the start of next season after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in his right knee while playing flag football.

Berkman will have surgery within 10 days, the Astros said Friday, and will need to be six months to recover. The injury occurred during a church-related function, new Astros General Manager Tim Lincecum said.

A three-time NL All-Star, Berkman hit .316 this season with 30 homers and 106 RBIs. Berkman, who made his major league debut in 1999, has a 303 career average with 156 homers and 535 RBIs.

Berkman is eligible for salary



Briefs

arbitration and can become a free agent after next season. The Astros had been working to sign him to a long-term deal.

Baldelli has knee surgery

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. — Tampa Bay Devil Rays center fielder Rocco Baldelli had surgery Friday to repair a torn ligament in his left knee.

Devil Rays head trainer Ken Crenshaw and team doctors said Baldelli will be able to play again in six to nine months.

Baldelli injured the knee on Oct. 24 while playing baseball with his younger brother at his home in Cumberland, R.I.

Progress in World Cup talks

TOKYO — Officials from Japan, South Korea and Major League Baseball made significant progress Friday in talks aimed at setting up a World Cup tournament in 2006.

Commissioners of professional leagues in Japan and South Korea met Friday with Bob DuPuy, Major League Baseball's chief operating officer.

"Everyone expressed support for a global baseball tournament," said Jim Small, managing director of Major League Baseball's Japan office. "We did not announce a World Cup tournament but made significant progress toward that end. A lot of work still needs to be done."

Files: Kobe accused told friend of plans for suit

The Associated Press

DENVER — A month after a hotel worker accused NBA star Kobe Bryant of rape, she allegedly told a friend that she was considering suing him in civil court and planned to use any money she won for breast implants, a koala bear and opening a recording studio.

The details came in testimony from Sean Holloway, who knew the then-19-year-old woman from the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, according to court documents released Friday.

During a closed hearing March 2, defense attorney Hal Haddon asked Holloway about a conversation with the woman near the end of July 2003, about a month after the alleged assault. The hearing was to determine whether information about the woman's sexual activities could be used in court against her.

Haddon asked whether the woman had mentioned the possibility of a civil lawsuit.

"She said that after the case was over it was something that she was most likely going to do," Holloway said.

He testified the woman, an aspiring singer, wanted to use any award money to open a recording studio and to pay for breast augmentation surgery for herself and a friend. He also said she would buy a koala bear for another friend who liked the animals.

Under questioning by prosecutor Dana Easter, Holloway acknowledged he had trouble remembering details of the conversation. He refused to answer whether drug use might have affected his memory.

It is unclear whether District Judge Terry Ruckriegle had ruled on the prosecution's request to limit Holloway's testimony.

Sports briefs

the woman said she no longer wanted to participate.

The woman, now 20, has filed a civil suit against Bryant in federal court for what she says have been months of pain and suffering since the alleged assault at a Vail-area resort where she once worked.

Holloway's testimony was contained in some 500 pages of documents among previously sealed documents the judge has ordered released at the request of news organizations.

Bengals lose WR Warrick

CINCINNATI — Bengals wide receiver Peter Warrick is out for the year after injuring his left shin in the season opener.

"His injury has not healed in a way that he could play productively," Cincinnati coach Marvin Lewis said. "Our doctors all agree that the best course for Peter is to have a surgery that will allow him to fully recover in plenty of time for 2005."

The injury was believed to have been a serious shin bruise at first but was later diagnosed as a cracked bone.

Warrick was hurt against the New York Jets but finished the game and played the following week against Miami. He was then used in just a few plays against Baltimore on Sept. 26 and against Denver on Oct. 25.

He has 11 catches for 127 yards this season.

Carpiati, Venus ousted

VILLANOVA, Pa. — Venus Williams and Jennifer Carpiati lost their shots at qualifying for the WTA Tour Championships with losses Friday in the Advanta tournament.

Top-seeded Amelie Mauresmo beat Williams 7-5, 7-5, 6-1. Vera Zvonareva ousted Carpiati 6-1 in their quarterfinals match.

Zvonareva will face Nadia Petrova in the semifinals.

Seventh-seeded Petrova defeated French open champion Anastasia Myskina 6-3, 4-6, 6-4.

Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova, who won the gold medal Olympic bronze medalist Alicia Molik 3-6, 6-1, 6-3 to reach the semifinals.



Wide receiver Plaxico Burress celebrates his touchdown during Pittsburgh's victory over previously undefeated New England last weekend. The Steelers (6-1) host the Philadelphia Eagles (7-0) on Sunday.

Hot Steelers zero in on another undefeated team

BY DAVE GOLDBERG

The Associated Press

A week ago, the Pittsburgh Steelers faced a daunting double playing the NFL's two unbeaten teams, albeit at home. They got through the first half by easily beating New England, ending the Patriots' 21-game winning streak, and now get Philadelphia (7-0).

Don't look for a letdown. "We'll be fine," coach Bill Cowher says. "We aren't going to squander what we have created for ourselves. We'll be ready to go, trust me."

Trust him.

The Eagles are favored by 1½ points, even on the road against a 6-1 team. That's a measure of the regard in which Philadelphia is held against a team that has won five in a row with rookie quarterback Ben Roethlisberger.

Things are getting harder for the Eagles.

They won their first five games by 10 points or more, including wins the first two weeks over the Giants and Vikings, who with Atlanta are the closest teams to



them in the NFC. But not too close — all have two losses.

Their past two wins have been a lot tougher, in overtime in Cleveland and 15-10 last week at home over Baltimore. That makes this their third straight game against a team from the AFC North.

There's a personal angle here too, although not as intense as the wounding last week between Terrell Owens and Ray Lewis. Duane Staley, who always thought he was underutilized during seven seasons in Philadelphia, is having an outstanding season as the Steelers' principle running back, averaging 4.7 yards per carry.

So the Steelers give the '72 Dolphins something to cheer about in a season in which they can hardly find anything positive about the current Miami team.

STEELERS, 20-17.

Minnesota (plus 6) at Indianapolis (Monday night): Daunte Culpepper vs. Peyton Manning means yet another shootout for the Colts, who are averaging 31 points a game, best in the league, but surrendering 25, fourth worst. That means the Vikings will score even without Randy Moss. ... COLTS, 42-34.

New England (minus 2½) at St. Louis: The Patriots will be without Ty Law and maybe Corey Dillon, and the Rams will be rested after an off week. But the winning-streak pressure is off now for New England and St. Louis is a model of inconsistency. ... PATRIOTS, 24-20.

Houston (plus 6) at Denver: The Texans are over 500 for the first time in their history. The Broncos have played badly in two straight losses. Given the NFL's

unpredictability ... BRONCOS, 20-16.

Cleveland (plus 6) at Baltimore: The Browns upset the Ravens 20-3 on opening day. ... RAVENS, 20-3.

New York Jets (minus 3) at Buffalo: The people who doubt the Jets point to their schedule. All they can do is play the teams the league tells them to. ... JETS, 24-17.

Kansas City (minus 3) at Tampa Bay: The Chiefs have scored 101 points in their past two games. Tampa Bay's defense is better than that. ... CHIEFS, 23-22.

New Orleans (plus 6) at San Diego: The spread shows how high the Chargers have risen. ... CHARGERS, 34-24.

Chicago (plus 9) at New York Giants: In pregame coachspeak, Tom Coughlin makes these Bears sound like the '85 version. Come on, Tom. ... GIANTS, 27-6.

Washington (plus 3½) at Detroit: The Redskins got beaten by the zebras last week. This week the Lions will do it. ... LIONS, 17-12.

Seattle (minus 7) at San Francisco: Tim Rattay might play for the 49ers, giving them some offense. But not enough. ... SEAHAWKS, 28-20.

Dallas (minus 1) at Cincinnati: The Cowboys found their ground game against Detroit. It should be there against the Bengals, too. ... COWBOYS, 28-20.

Oakland (plus 6) at Carolina: Extra motivation for the Panthers. John Fox and Al Davis dislike each other. ... PANTHERS, 27-17.

Arizona (plus 3) at Miami: When was the last time the Cardinals had more wins than the Dolphins? ... CARDINALS, 20-10.

Last week: 9-5 (spread), 9-5 (straight up). Season: 60-54-2 (spread), 76-40 (straight up).

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Patriots try to get back on winning track

Streak is over, but N.E. has accomplished much since last meeting Rams

By R.B. FALLSTROM
The Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The last time the St. Louis Rams and New England Patriots played, everything was at stake.

In their heyday as the Greatest Show on Turf, the Rams were the odds-makers' top touchdown favorite in the 2002 Super Bowl. They were one of the biggest favorites to fall, losing 20-17 on Adam Vinatieri's 47-yard field goal as time expired.

"I still remember just turning around and watching that ball sail through the uprights and all of that confetti falling in the wrong color," defensive tackle Tyoka Jackson said. "That's the memory I'll think of always."

Not all of the Rams who were around then have that same depth of feeling. Wide receiver Isaac Bruce said there's nothing special about facing the Patriots for the first time since then. He doesn't even think about the game that could have solidified the Rams as one of the great offensive forces in league history.

St. Louis won its first Super Bowl after the 1999 season and was attempting to win two championships in a three-year span — something the Patriots subsequently did.

"I don't hold any grudges," Bruce said. "It's spilled milk and



10 p.m. Sunday
AFN-Pacific

Game time is Central European.

the milk's been cleaned up, so you just move on."

Now, the focus is more on the Patriots' amazing record since then. New England (6-1) had won an NFL-record 18 straight games and 21 in a row counting the postseason before collapsing under the weight of four losses in a 34-20 loss to the Steelers last week.

The loss was the Patriots' first since Sept. 28, 2003 against the Redskins.

Understandably, they're more proud of accomplishing what the Rams couldn't: those two Super Bowl wins.

"We've always said that you're defined in this league by championships, and not how many regular season games you win in a row," linebacker Mike Vrabel said. "People always remember the champion, and that's our goal every year."

The Rams (4-3) had known Bill

Belichick was building something special earlier in the 2001 season when they won 24-17 at New England. After that game, coach Mike Martz referred to them as a Super Bowl-caliber team, and earlier in the game week he called Belichick a "Hall of Fame coach."

"I mean this sincerely when I tell you that he's the standard we're all trying to get to," Martz said. "He may be as good as there's ever been."

Belichick returns the favor, admitting he's borrowed aspects of the Rams' offense over the years.

"Don't get me wrong, we're not the Rams — not even close," Belichick said. "The things that we do, we've definitely studied a lot of what they've done, and used some of it as it applies to what we do."

To start a new streak, the Patriots will have to control an offense that while still greatly respected isn't as dynamic as it used to be. The Rams were held to 14 points by the previously winless Dolphins twice weeks ago in their last game before a week off, and are averaging 22 points per game — although as they showed three weeks ago during a 17-point burst in the final 5/16 minutes against the Seahawks, they're still dangerous.

"It's a very explosive offense," Belichick said. "Mike has done a great job of developing it and utilizing the different people."

The Patriots will be at a disadvantage because neither of their starting cornerbacks will be available. Ty Law will miss four to six weeks with a broken bone in his left foot sustained in the Steelers loss, and Tyrone Poole is out with a knee injury.

That could hurt one of their trademarks, a physical style of play at the line of scrimmage that has frustrated wide receivers over the years. Although Bruce claims to have moved on from the Super Bowl loss, he remembers being slow to adapt to such rough-house tactics.

"I put it on myself for not realizing what type of game was going to be played in that Super Bowl," Bruce said. "I really didn't realize it until the third quarter that the referees were going to allow what was going on to go on."

Another disadvantage: The Patriots will be facing a team coming off a bye for the second straight week. And the Rams are 4-0 after the bye under Martz by a combined score of 156-57.

Part of the reason is the Rams are fresh. Their off week was extremely light: three days of weight lifting and running, but no practices.

A play for the Patriots is that running back Corey Dillon could be back from a thigh injury that sidelined him last week. He's still seventh in the AFC with 637 yards and a 4.9-yard average.

Collins returns to Carolina a changed man

His troubles behind him, Raiders quarterback to start against Panthers for first time

By JENNA FRYER
The Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Kerry Collins' last very public appearance in Charlotte was almost six years ago, when he swaggered out of jail with a cigar in his mouth following a drunk driving arrest.

His days as quarterback of the Carolina Panthers were over by then, and that 1998 incident seemed to indicate his NFL career was headed to a close, too.

Instead, it marked the beginning of a turnaround for Collins. He quit drinking, sought help for alcoholism and embarked on a comeback that took him to a Super Bowl with the New York Giants.

He'll come full circle Sunday when he returns to Charlotte as quarterback of the Oakland Raiders (2-6). He'll lead the Carolina Panthers (1-6) for the first time in his career.

Collins is a far different man today than he was when the Panthers drafted him in the first pick in franchise history in 1995.

"Before, when I was in Carolina, I was searching for peace and I looked in a lot of the wrong places," Collins said. "But now, I feel I couldn't be happier with where my life is and a lot of it had to do with the changes I made."



Oakland Raiders quarterback Kerry Collins, the first draft pick in Carolina Panthers history, has come a long way since being branded a quitter and a racist in Charlotte.

Today, Collins is married and the proud father of a 9-month-old girl. He has been sober for five years. Back then, he was a pseudo celebrity in small-town Charlotte, a party guy who led Carolina into the NFC championship game.

By the time he walked into then-coach Don Capers' office midway through the 1998 season and said his heart was no longer into the game, he had been labeled a drunk, a quitter and a racist because of an off-color remark he said to a teammate during a drunken stupor at training camp.

Nothing changed when New Orleans picked up Collins that season and brought him back to Charlotte as a backup quarterback. He stayed behind after the game, got drunk and got arrested.

Soon after, Collins realized he had to straighten out.

"I think I realized if I continued doing what I was doing then I was going to be out of the NFL," Collins said. "It hit me one day and I realized the lifestyle I was living was going to ruin my career and ruin a great opportunity."

"I think it really was something that hit me one day. I realized that really like about the cause of all of the problems and I realized I needed a change."

Collins married a woman from nearby Concord, N.C., and makes his offseason home on a 1,562-acre farm in Montgomery County. It's a working cattle farm, and Collins owns 200 head of registered Black Angus.

"It's a place where I really feel at home," Collins said.

"Regardless of what happened with my career there in Charlotte, there are a lot of things I really like about the place."

These days, Collins' struggles are on the field. He has thrown 11 interceptions and five touchdown

passes while losing all five starts with the Raiders.

One solace for him might be that Carolina is also struggling.

The Panthers have lost five consecutive games and are searching for their first home win of the season. They are 0-3 at Bank of America Stadium, and for whatever reason, the Panthers have never been unbeatable on their home turf. Although Carolina was 6-2 at home last season, the Panthers were just 8-16 the previous three years.

"You want to win your home games. You're supposed to have an advantage when you play at home," defensive end Julius Peppers said. "You don't want anybody to come in and get a win in your stadium, but sometimes you can't control what happens on the field."

If Carolina doesn't turn it around, the Panthers know they'll lose their fan support.

"If you ain't giving the fans nothing to be excited about, they're not going to come," defensive tackle Brenton Buckner said. "It's hard to ask somebody to sit down in a stadium on Sunday when it's 60 degrees and raining and cheer if they don't feel like they're getting anything to cheer about."

"This is a production business, even for fans. Fans like winning."

Favre: Rough year away from field for durable Packers QB

FAVRE, FROM BACK PAGE

But the quest to become the ninth team in NFL history to reach the playoffs after a 1-4 start won't be easy. They're still two games against Minnesota and trips to Houston and Philadelphia on tap.

Their three-game winning streak coincides with coach-general manager Mike Sherman directing offensive coordinator, Tom Rossley, underwent emergency heart surgery, and Sherman plans on calling the plays indefinitely, much to Favre's delight.

But as he huddled with his staff last week to review the season's first half, Sherman found many of the same problems he was dealing with at the bye last year: an underperforming defensive line that was expecting much better production from high-priced players Cletidus Hunt and Kabeer Gbaj-Biamila, a suspect secondary, an inadequate turnover differential and a team that's drawing too many flags.

Also, a star running back who is putting the ball on the ground too often, although Ahman Green seems to have rectified the problem after ditching the elbow pads that facilitated the ball squirting away.

Sherman also sees a 35-year-old quarterback who shows no signs of slowing down despite a new osteoporosis popping in seemingly every week.

Favre says he's no Superman, he just carries on like anybody else would. He has no idea why he plays his best when things are at their worst, other than the notion he sees the game as his last hurra, focusing his better on the task at hand and takes extra pride in playing well in spite of shipwreck.

After his wife, Deanna, was diagnosed with breast cancer, many teammates wondered if the news would hasten his retirement. But Favre said it wouldn't push him into a knee-jerk reaction to his future.

"Do I think about it? Sure. Especially during times like this, I think about it. But I see it every time something happens people want to jump on the retirement bandwagon. And the more people ask me, the more I want to stick around just to stick it to 'em," Favre said.

Rossley said he never worries about the burdens becoming too heavy for Favre because every time there's a new barrier, he somehow finds a way to overcome it.

"When times are tough, he digs down," Rossley said. "And there's something special that comes out of Brett Favre."

Haas leads Tour Championship

Woods trails by three after bogey-free second-round 64

BY DOUG FERGUSON
The Associated Press

ATLANTA — The Tour Championship suddenly is loaded with optimism for Jay Haas and Tiger Woods.

Haas turns 51 next month, making him the oldest player to qualify for this All-Star Game. For those wondering when he'll start playing with guys his own age, Haas again showed no signs of slowing down with a 4-under 66, giving him a two-shot lead over Stephen Ames.

"If I was 50 and sitting at home, nobody would be talking about me," Haas said about the constant references to his age. "I'm just glad I've got a parking spot out there and they let me tee off this week."

The way he finished Friday at East Lake — a nifty par save from 60 feet away in a bunker, followed by a slick 12-foot birdie on the 18th — Haas looked as if he might be able to end 11 years and 276 tournaments without winning.

"It's way too early to get too excited about it," said Haas, who was at 7-under 133. "But I haven't done it with smoke and mirrors. I've played solid golf, and that gives me encouragement."

Woods has been hammered all year for changing the swing that

made him the only professional to win four straight majors. His only victory this year came in the Match Play Championship in late February. And with Vijay Singh dominating golf, Woods has become a forgotten man.

That changed Friday when he made two birdies with stunning recovery shots, never came seriously close to a bogey and matched his best score of the year, a bogey-free 64 that left him three shots behind.

"There are risks to getting better," Woods said. "I've always taken risks to try and become a better golfer, and that's one of the things that's got me as far as I have."

Woods got into contention with an array of exciting shots. One was a 6-iron off pine straw that he hooked under a tree to within 20 feet for birdie on No. 5. The other came on the 16th, the toughest hole at East Lake, where he hit an 8-iron from 203 yards over pine trees to 12 feet.

U.S. Open champion Retief Goosen had a 66 and joined Woods at 4-under 136.

Singh has some catching up to do if he wants to end the year with 10 victories. The 41-year-old Fujian took 35 putts on a cool, breezy afternoon and shot 73, ending his streak of 14 rounds at par

or better. That left Singh in 17th place among 30 players, seven shots out of the lead.

Almost as impressive as his score was the way Haas finished. The final three holes are among the toughest at East Lake, and they knocked Mike Weir and Zach Johnson off the leader board.

Weir was at 6-under and in the lead until a bogey-double bogey finish, taking four shots from just behind the 18th green to sink to a 69 and finish at 2-under. Johnson was at 5-under until he ran into problems on the 16th, hitting an air ball with his wedge from behind the green and making triple bogey.

Haas has accomplished about all he could have imagined in the two years since his career got fresh legs. He played on the Presidents Cup team last year. He became the second-oldest player in the Ryder Cup. He became the oldest player in the Tour Championship, for only the top 30 players on the money list.

Despite not winning for the past eight months, Woods has been in this position before, but has not been able to hold onto a 36-hole lead or make up ground.

In his first tournament since getting married Oct. 5, the former No. 1 player in the world was hopeful that swing changes are start-



KRT

Despite ranking next-to-last in driving accuracy through two rounds of the Tour Championship (32 percent), Tiger Woods has been bailed out by fine recovery shots (69 percent greens in regulation) and his putter (28 putts in each of the first two rounds).

ing to produce positive results. "If I play my best, I'm pretty tough to beat," Woods said. "I would like to play my best more frequently, and that's the whole idea. That's why you make changes. I thought that I could become more consistent and play at a higher level more often."

Sorenstam seeks fourth Mizuno title

The Associated Press

OTSU, Japan — Annika Sorenstam moved into position for her record-tying fourth consecutive Mizuno Classic title, shooting 6-under 66 on Saturday to take a

four-stroke lead into the final round.

The Swedish star, trying to match the LPGA Tour record of four straight victories in a tournament set by Laura Davies in the 1994-97 Standard Register Ping, birdied Nos. 17 and 18 — both par-5s — for the second straight day to finish at 15-under 129.

Japan's Chihiro Nakajima, tied for the first-round lead, shot 70 to fall to second place.

Grace Park shot 69 to finish at 8-under along with Davies (69), Arree Song (70) and four others.

Thongchai leads in Vietnam

HANOI, Vietnam — Thongchai Jaidee of Thailand shot 8-under 64 Saturday to take a two-stroke lead after the third round of the inaugural Vietnam Masters. Corey Pavin shot 71 and trails by six shots.

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SPORTS



Investigation sheds light
on fatal crash of
Hendrick plane, Page 27

'What, no game today?'

A week off for Green Bay is the only thing that can keep iron-man QB Brett Favre off the field

BY ARNIE STAPLETON
The Associated Press

BRETT Favre has mixed feelings about the Green Bay Packers taking this weekend off, and not just because they're one of the league's hottest teams.

Football is as much Favre's get-away as it is his knack.

The ostensibly indestructible quarterback has made a living out of thriving in tough times, of excelling through injury and tragedy, and he's had plenty of both lately.

A year after playing with a broken thumb on his throwing hand that is now chronically swollen, Favre has jammed his throwing hand, sprained his right thumb, been knocked out of games with a

concussion and a softball-sized leg bruise, and winced as his troublesome left shoulder popped out of socket during a game.

He's also been coping with the death of his brother-in-law in an ATV accident on his property in Mississippi nine months after losing his father to a heart attack. And last month, his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Yet he keeps on directing Green Bay into the end zone, throwing for 2,007 yards and 14 touchdowns, second only to Daunte Culpepper in the NFC. And he's extended his record quarterback starting streak to 216 games, counting playoffs.

Since he last spent a game as a backup, America has gone to the polls four times to elect a president.

Favre can certainly use the respite, but he could sure use a game Sunday, too. While he's looking forward to getting away from it all for a few days, he's also eager to get back to work next week.

"I think in some ways, yeah, it will kind of — not just for myself but my family — be normal,"

Favre said of spending four days back home on his ranch. "That's good and, at times, that's bad. [Without football] there's nothing to hide behind or escape to. But as with anything, time heals. The fact I get a chance to play football and devote most of my time to that has helped me in a lot of ways.

"I think it will be good and bad, emotionally and physically."

At least Favre can take time off knowing the Packers (4-4) have given themselves a fighting chance now that they've righted their season with wins over Detroit, Dallas and Washington the last three weeks.

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"The more people ask me [about retirement], the more I want to stick around just to stick it to 'em."

Brett Favre

The facts on Favre

■ Has played in 199 consecutive games (218 including playoffs) and has made 197 consecutive starts (216 including playoffs), 81 more than the next-closest streak on the all-time quarterbacks list, 116 by Ron Jaworski (1977-84).

■ Has completed a touchdown pass in 33 straight games, second to Johnny Unitas' 47-game stretch (1956-60).

■ Ranks second to Dan Marino with 4,133 career completions and 360 touchdown passes.

■ His 47,653 career passing yards rank behind only Marino, John Elway and Warren Moon on the all-time list.

■ Is among the top-three QBs in the NFC in yards passing, touchdowns passes, and quarterback rating.



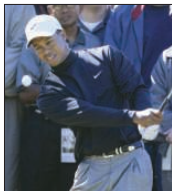
Spurs roll past Kobe-led Lakers with all-around team effort

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Patriots ready to rebound vs. Rams in rematch of 2002 Super Bowl

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Woods trails Haas by three shots in season-ending Tour Championship

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